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Mind-blowing problems at the workplace

Creating a supportive ecosystem at the initiative of senior staff members to deal with mental health issues, is the way ahead

**Swati Piramal,
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What is the new approach that business leaders are trying out to combat mental health issues at workplace? The pandemic brought to fore a large number of health issues simmering under the surface in many companies.

According to *Harvard Business Review*, in 2019, “employers were just beginning to grasp the prevalence of mental health challenges at work, the need to address stigma, the emerging link to equity and inclusion. In 2020, mental health support went from a nice-to-have to a business imperative.”

Post pandemic, the stakes have become higher. Many employees are rethinking work timings, many have left old jobs, and the trend of employees resigning *en masse*, are leaving employers seriously short staffed.

This has become a global challenge, affecting the service, manufacturing and

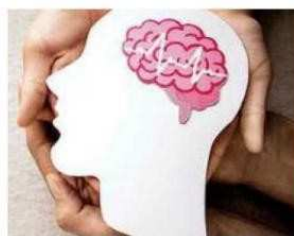
technical sectors where jobs involve long work hours. The positive aspect is that more employers and employees are talking about mental health and the disclosure is widespread.

ADVOCATES OF CHANGE

Leaders today are becoming advocates of change of culture in companies and it is clear that employers benefit from this cultural change. Mental health awareness and having a happy workplace are organisational priorities. According to a recent report by the global consulting firm Deloitte, Indian firms lost \$14 billion due to poor mental health amongst employees last year.

Conversations around mental health at workplace are needed and can be uplifting. Following are three ways in which leaders can broach the subject at workplace. A top-down approach involving the senior management is the recommended path for these suggestions to be effective.

First, stories of emotional and mental resilience are always inspiring, especially if they are personal accounts.



World Mental Health Day /ISTOCKPHOTO

Resilience and grit are key ingredients that help us cope. Sharing stories of success and achievements despite obstacles can be cathartic and also become a source of inspiration for others.

Second, addressing mental health is a team sport. When an individual is battling her mind, and struggling with thoughts and emotions, she needs the support of loved ones, help of medical professional, and colleagues at work.

Companies and senior management should espouse empathy towards colleagues sharing their mental health at work. A supportive ecosystem at the workplace can do wonders for employees, thus benefiting the organisation in the long run.

Finally, gratitude. We often think of gratitude in a personal context, but gratitude can be applied to a professional context too. Because there is no mental well-being without gratitude.

These ideas — emotional and mental resilience, being workplace allies, and expressing gratitude in a professional context — may not solve the invisible challenges facing millions of individuals at workplaces across India. But they can be powerful steps towards enhancing our collective and professional mental well-being. On World Mental Health Day, they give us what we most need — empathy and hope.

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[How to talk about mental health in the workplace](#)

What is the new approach that business leaders are trying out to combat mental health issues in the workplace? The pandemic revealed a large number of health issues simmering under the surface in many companies. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, in 2019, “employers were just beginning to grasp the prevalence of mental health challenges at work, the need to address stigma, the emerging link to equity and inclusion. In 2020, mental health support went from a nice-to-have to a business imperative.”

Post pandemic, the stakes have become higher. Many employees are rethinking work timings, many have left old jobs, and the trend of employees resigning *en masse*, what is popularly called ‘The Great Resignation,’ are leaving employers seriously short staffed. This has become a global challenge, affecting the service, manufacturing and technical sectors where jobs comprise long work hours. The positive aspect is that more employers and employees are talking about mental health and the disclosure is widespread. Stressful, emotionally draining, or boring work is being discarded.

Leaders today are becoming advocates of change of culture in companies and it is clear that employers

benefit from this cultural change. On the macro front, countries are investing in spending more on



healthcare and research, and development of new vaccines. Pandemic readiness is becoming a national strategy. Mental health awareness and having a happy workplace are organisational priorities. According to a recent report by the global consulting firm Deloitte, Indian firms lost \$14 billion due to poor mental health amongst employees last year. Since poor mental health directly impacts one's physical health, it has a multiplier effect on our national medical systems and infrastructure.

Conversations around mental health in the workplace are needed and can be uplifting. Following are three ways in which leaders can broach the subject at the workplace. A top-down approach involving the senior management is the recommended path for these suggestions to be effective.

First, stories of emotional and mental resilience are always inspiring, especially if they are personal stories. All of us face setbacks at some point, whether personal and professional. Resilience and grit are key ingredients to helping us cope. Sharing stories of success and achievements despite obstacles can be cathartic and also become a source of inspiration for others. Second, addressing mental health is a team sport. Mental health conditions are not like Covid-19, which requires isolation. When an individual is battling their mind, and struggling with their thoughts and emotions, they need the support of their loved ones, their medical professional, and their colleagues at work.

Companies and senior management should espouse empathy towards colleagues sharing their mental health at work. A supportive ecosystem at workplaces can do wonders for employees, thus benefitting the organisation in the long run. Many of us may not have a mental health condition ourselves, but most of us are allies to someone with a mental health condition. We must visibly demonstrate that in the workplace.

Finally, gratitude. We often think of gratitude in a personal context, but gratitude can be applied to a professional context too — towards our people, teams, customers, investors, suppliers, partners, and the many stakeholders involved in a business. Because there is no mental well-being without gratitude.

These ideas — emotional and mental resilience, being workplace allies, and expressing gratitude in a professional context — may not solve the invisible challenges facing millions of individuals in workplaces across India. But they are a powerful step towards enhancing our collective and professional mental well-being. On World Mental Health Day, they give us what we most need — empathy and hope.

