



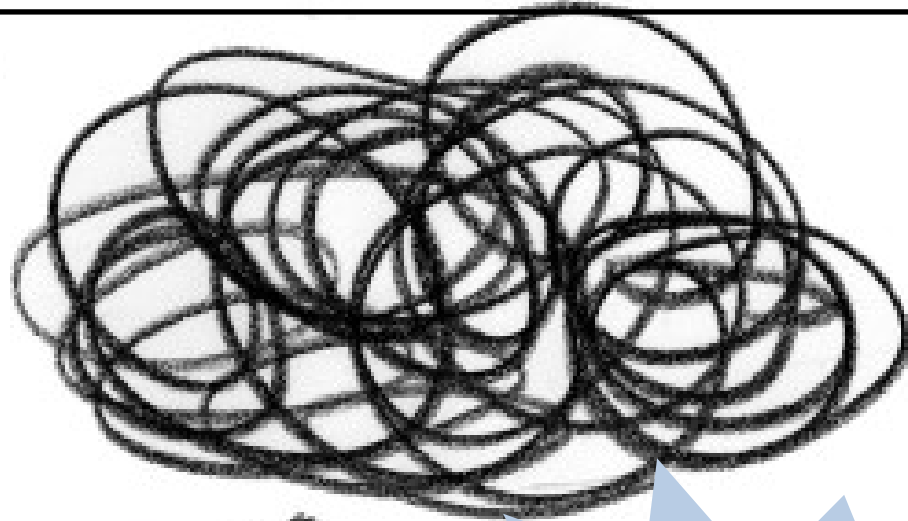
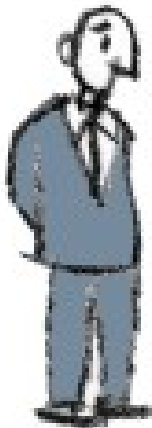
WELLNESS WORKS....

at Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

A Publication from Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara's Wellness Works Committee

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MENTAL ILLNESS IS COMMON.



FEEL GREAT AT WORK: *Keep yourself and your colleagues physically and mentally healthy and you'll all feel great at work! Sometimes it's the little things that make work the best place to be.*

THAT'S WHY MENTAL HEALTH IS SO IMPORTANT.

Colleagues often don't notice when a person is struggling with mental illness: Sufferers usually put on a brave front and will go to great lengths to hide it. There's a tendency for all of us to back off from people who are going through these early signs of distress rather than reach out. And the backing off versus the reaching out is the basic challenge we've now got to meet.

There is no doubt mental illness is pervasive in the Canadian workplace. Approximately 7.5 million Canadians suffer a mental disorder each year, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. One in five Canadians will experience a mental disorder during their lifetimes, with anxiety and depression being the most common, according to the Canadian Psychological Association.

The most common signs that someone is grappling with mental illness at work include missed deadlines, unexplained absenteeism, lateness, lack of energy, lack of focus and irritability.

Not addressing mental-health issues at work can have major financial effects.

A 2008 survey of more than 450 Canadian organizations found that about 35 million work days are lost each year due to mental illness. The survey, conducted by Mercer Human Resource Consulting in partnership with the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, also found that mental-health issues account for nearly 40 per cent of short-term disability claims and play a part in 50 per cent of long-term claims. More than 30 per cent of Manulife Financial Corp.'s long-term disability claims are related to mental illness.



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The Myths of Mental Illness

There are many myths about mental illness. Until people learn the truth, they will continue to deny that mental illness exists at all or to avoid the topic entirely.

How much do you know about mental illness? Here are some of the common myths – and truths.

- **People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.** The truth is that, as a group, mentally ill people are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves.
- **People with mental illness are poor and/or less intelligent.** Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.
- **Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.** A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness, and it has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot just "snap out of it".
- **Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.** Mental illness is not a single disease but a broad classification for many disorders. Anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders and organic brain disorders can cause misery, tears and missed opportunities for thousands of Canadians.

So What Can You Do?

- All of us can help the way people think about mental illness.
- **Start with yourself.** Be careful about your own choice of words. Use accurate and sensitive words when talking about people with mental illness. Your positive attitude can affect everyone with whom you have contact.
- **Try to influence all the people in your life constructively.** Whenever you hear people say things that show they do not really understand mental illness, use the opportunity to share with them some of the information that you have.

Getting Help...

Mental illnesses can take many forms, just as physical illnesses do. Mental illnesses are still feared and misunderstood by many people, but the fear will disappear as people learn more about them. If you or someone you know has a mental illness, there is good news: all mental illnesses can be treated.

If you or someone you know develops the symptoms of a mental illness, it is important to get it diagnosed and to start treatment as soon as possible. Staff are encouraged to utilize BICR's EFAP program: Human Solutions Humaines, by calling 1-800-663-1142 or visiting www.humansolutions.ca.

It is human nature to fear what we don't understand. As such, mental illness is feared by many people and, unfortunately, still carries a stigma (a stigma is defined as a mark or sign of disgrace). Because of this stigma, many people hesitate to get help for a mental health problem for fear of being looked down upon. It is unfortunate that this happens because effective treatment exists for almost all mental illnesses. Worse, the stigma experienced by people with a mental illness can be more destructive than the illness itself.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY IS OCTOBER 10TH!