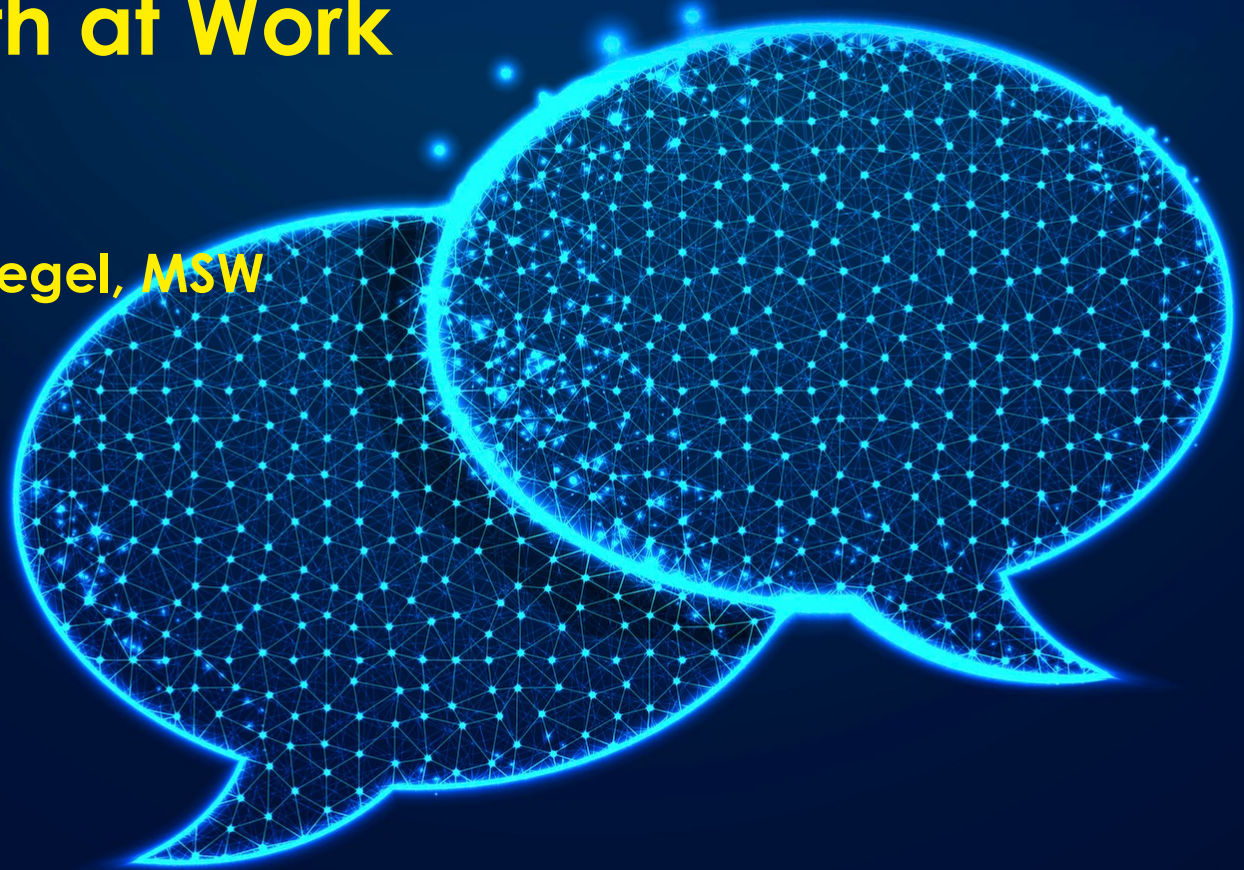
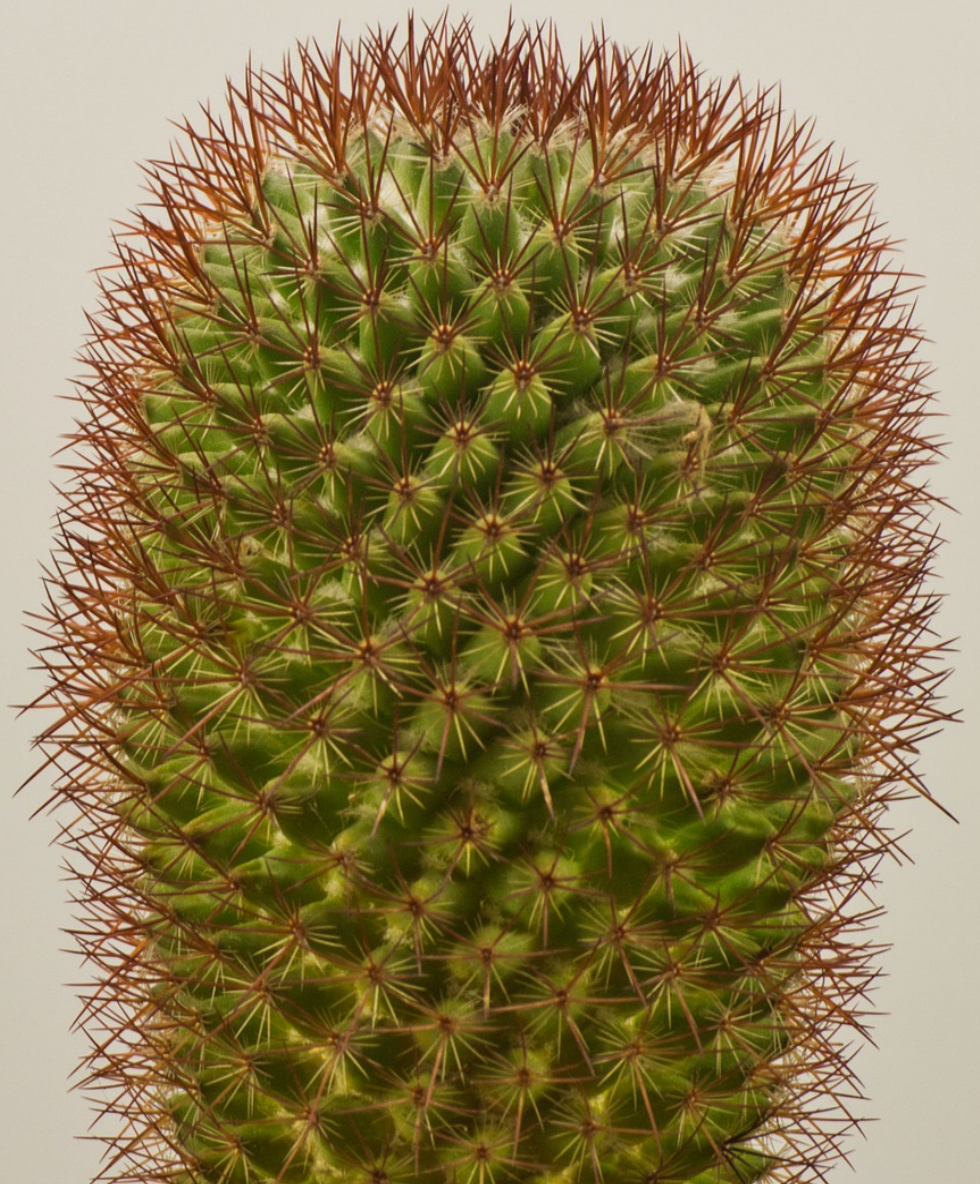


How to Talk About Mental Health at Work

Facilitated by
Deborah Grayson Riegel, MSW
LSA '93
(LSA MOM '23)







1. How would you let Jamie know you and your colleagues were thinking about him while he was in the hospital?
2. What would you do to help Jamie ease his transition back to work?
3. What would you say to Jamie if he were worried about how his illness might impact his job?



We Need to Talk More About Mental Health at Work

by [Morra Aarons-Mele](#)

“When we acknowledge our mental health, we get to know ourselves better, and are more authentic people, employees, and leaders. Research has found that feeling authentic and open at work leads to **better performance, engagement, employee retention, and overall wellbeing.**”

Our Four Strategies

1. Talk About Mental Health like Physical Health
2. Give Them your Full Attention
3. Be a Bridge to Resources
4. Watch Your Language

Strategy 1: Talk About Mental Health like Physical Health



APGAR SCORES

A

ACTIVITY

P

PULSE

G

GRIMACE

A

APPEARANCE

R

RESPIRATION



The Apgar score is a number assigned to a baby right after birth to help the medical team quickly assess the baby's health. The score is used to help indicate how likely it is that the newborn will need medical intervention.

A.P.G.A.R. FOR ADULTS

APPEARANCE
(PHYSICAL)

Visibly evident sleep disturbance, dejected posture and bodily pain

PERFORMANCE
(MENTAL)

Impairment of cognitive performance (due to time pressure, information overload and uncertainty)

GROWTH
(SPIRITUAL)

Loss of a sense of purpose, direction and hope for a better future

AFFECT CONTROL
(EMOTIONAL)

Uncontrolled outbursts, irritability, withdrawing, sadness

RELATIONSHIPS
(SOCIAL)

Deterioration of relationships and social isolation

A.P.G.A.R. FOR ADULTS

APPEARANCE
(PHYSICAL)

*How are you keeping your energy up?
How are you sleeping?
What do you do to stay active?*

PERFORMANCE
(MENTAL)

*How are you coping with your workload
right now?
What about work feels hard?
What can I take off your plate?*

GROWTH
(SPIRITUAL)

*What gives you purpose and meaning at
the moment –at work or outside of work?
What are you learning these days?*

AFFECT CONTROL
(EMOTIONAL)

*What are your coping strategies?
What's hardest for you to deal with?
What makes you happy right now?*

RELATIONSHIPS
(SOCIAL)

*Who is on your go-to list at work? At
home?
Who are you helping?
Who helps you?*

Strategy 2: Give Them Your Full Attention



Strategy 3: Be a Bridge to Resources



“What Helps When You’re Feeling Stressed?”

A mantra:

Smells:

A place in your home:

Song or sounds:

A taste:

An object:

A person:

An activity:

Remind Your Colleague about Other Helpers

- 
- A young woman with dark hair is climbing a metal ladder. She is looking directly at the camera and reaching out with her right hand towards the viewer. The background is a stone wall with a metal grate. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue gradient at the top and bottom.
- EAP
 - Mental health professional
 - Medical doctor
 - Coach
 - Spiritual/religious clergy, group, healer
 - Support group
 - Friends and family
 - Retreat
 - Addiction recovery specialist
 - Exercise instructor
 - Acupuncturist
 - Meditation expert
 - Financial planner
 - Accountant
 - Parenting expert
 - Gerontologist
 - Time management expert
 - Nutritionist
 - Massage therapist
 - Organizer
 - Pet care
 - Child care
 - House cleaner
 - Personal care specialist (hair, nails, etc.)

Strategy 4: Watch Your Language

WILLKOMMEN

欢迎

स्वागत

BIENVENIDA

WELCOME

BIENVENUE

ようこそ

добро пожаловать

ترحيب

BEM-VINDO

Try One of These...

1. I want to talk to you about something that feels a little awkward...but I am going to embrace the awkward and go for it.
2. I want to ask you about something — and you're not in trouble, I promise!
3. One commitment I've made this year is to talk to everyone on the team about how they're feeling and coping. When would be a good time for us to talk?
4. You've been on my mind a lot lately, and I would like to share why...
5. I'd like to talk to you about how you're doing/feeling because I care about you, I'm feeling concerned, and I'd like to help. Would you be open to a conversation?
6. You haven't seemed like yourself for a little while, and I'd like to check in for a few minutes. Is now a good time?
7. I notice that I don't feel like I'm operating at 100% days, and I imagine I'm not alone. Can we chat about this?

How Not To Respond

1. “Everything happens for a reason.”
2. “You’ll bounce back – you always do.”
3. “Think positive!”
4. “Don't stress about this!”
5. “You just need to try harder.”
6. “There are so many people that have it worse than you.”
7. “What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.”
8. “This too shall pass.”

Whitney Goodman, The Collaborative Counseling Center LLC

Try These Instead

1. “Thank you for confiding in me.”
2. “This is hard.”
3. “I believe you.”
4. “I am here to support you through this.”
5. “May I ask you a few questions?”
6. “What would be most helpful to you right now?”
7. “What can I take off your plate?”
8. “Let’s make a plan.”
9. “Let’s discuss the resources we have available here, and what else you might need.”
10. “I’ve been through something similar. And while I don’t want to make this about me, I am open to sharing my experience with you if and when it would be helpful.”

Have a C.A.L.M.E.R. Conversation about Mental Health

Communicate clearly and compassionately that you are fully present, and paying attention.

Ask them to share what they're thinking and feeling.

Listen without judging, solving, prying, pushing, or pulling away.

Make it easy for them to be open with you by saying *"thank you for sharing this with me"* and asking *"how can best support you?"*

Explain what resources are available to them at work, and also ask what resources they have available to them outside of work.

Revisit the conversation in a few days or weeks by checking in with them about how they're feeling, and what else they might need.

Our Four Strategies

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An underwater photograph showing sunlight filtering through clear blue water onto a sandy seabed. The light creates shimmering patterns on the sand and ripples in the water above. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

**What Will You Be
Reflecting
On?**

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