



ISSUE: Mental Health DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) common diagnosis.

THINGS TO CONSIDER: Many people suffer from various forms of mental illness. These people are able to function in society without their mental illness being visible or noticeable. Many will not talk about their illness because of the stigma that comes with being diagnosed, and/or the shame they may personally feel about their illness.

- **There are varying degrees of a diagnosis.** Certain criteria must be met before a diagnosis is made. Mild, moderate, or severe are used only when the full criteria for the disorder are “currently” met.
- **Understanding the basics** of some of the more common mental health disorders will help to alleviate any fears or judgments.
- **There are times when the diagnosis criteria are no longer met.** The person may be in partial remission (some symptoms remain) or have full remission (no longer any symptoms, signs, but still have a prior history of the disorder).
- **DSM diagnosis is usually applied to an individual’s current situation** and not usually for a previous diagnosis from which they may have already recovered.
- **Mild:** Few, if any symptoms, in excess of those required in making the diagnosis are present. Symptoms result in minor impairment in social or occupational functioning.
- **Moderate:** Symptoms or functional impairment between mild and severe are present.
- **Severe:** Many symptoms in excess of those required to make the diagnosis, or several symptoms that are particularly severe are present, or the symptoms result in marked impairment in social or occupational functioning.

THINGS TO DO: If and when the opportunity comes up to talk about an employee's disorder, show interest, be kind, compassionate and curious. Taking the time to get to know this employee will help you identify whether they are becoming ill or perhaps going into remission. This will help guide how you can support them.

- Educate yourself and take the time to learn more about some of the symptoms for depression, anxiety (panic attack), schizophrenia, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), manic depression, bipolar disorder among others.
- Don't be afraid if someone discloses that they have or have had episodes with any of these mental illnesses.
- Compile a list of mental health resources in your area and where you might look to for support if the need arises.
- Create a safe, non-judgmental environment for all employees.
- Create a process to encourage all employees to have a wellness plan in place and practice self care.

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