



MENTAL HEALTH IN THE BREWING INDUSTRY

According to 2022 data from [Mental Health America](#), nearly 50 million Americans experience mental illness, and it is estimated that over 11 million people nationwide experience serious suicidal thoughts. As of 2021, over 13% of adults, aged 18-64 had no medical insurance coverage, according to the [CDC](#). Regardless of whether medical insurance is offered as part of your brewery's benefits package, there are a number of ways to provide support to members of your team that may be struggling with their mental health or find support for yourself if you are struggling with your own mental health.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN THE BREWING INDUSTRY

Alcohol's Impact on Mental Health

Alcohol affects your central nervous system and as a depressant, creates the feeling of being relaxed. Because it's widely available and legal, it can be used to boost moods. Prolonged misuse is linked to injuries, liver disease, cardiovascular disease, chronic health conditions, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Working in the craft brewing industry places an additional layer of pressure on team members to partake in alcohol consumption in order to bond and socialize with peers. It is important for breweries to create an inclusive social environment for employees that may choose to abstain from alcohol consumption.

Co-occurring Use of Alcohol and Other Substances

Cocaine, Amphetamines, and medications used to treat neurological disorders like ADD/ADHD are stimulants and counteract the side effects of alcohol. In settings like festivals where there are extended hours of drinking, the desire and/or peer pressure to keep drinking exists but is inhibited by the side effects of alcohol.

Burnout of Workers and Company Leaders

Burnout is a syndrome, not just an individual experiencing occasional stress. It can result from chronic and unsuccessfully managed stress in the workplace. It can impact the health and safety of the employer and employee and includes exhaustion, mental distance from or negative feelings toward one's work, and reduced productivity.

Neglect of Physical Health

Our physical health goes hand and hand with our mental and emotional well-being. Studies show investing in physical activity can improve how we feel. During the pandemic, we may have had more time to fit exercise into our schedules, but prioritizing it is more important than ever. Even a quick 15-minute walk can be impactful. Taking work meetings outdoors if you're able and having "walk-and-talk" meetings are other ways to fit in exercise.

Staffing Shortages

The "great resignation" has created staffing shortages, which impacts the entire workplace. Current staff are filling the gap for positions that are taking time to fill, which may lead to burnout. Hiring managers are attempting to fill positions, but with smaller applicant pools causing their job to be increasingly more challenging. Hiring just to fill a position can also have devastating effects on the company and your team. The individual should be the right fit for the company and the role.

BEHAVIORS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY THAT CAN EXACERBATE AND IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Peer pressure and shaming culture
- Alcohol used to decompress
- Social Media promoting irresponsible drinking practices
- Lack of boundary setting related to work/life integration
- Lack of implementing policy and procedures to address drinking behaviors at workplace
- Overconsumption

SIGNS THAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT MAY BE NEEDED

In 2019, 1 in 8 individuals were living with a mental health disorder- most commonly anxiety and depression. [The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) estimates that these numbers have risen by an estimated 26-28% since 2019 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Signs and symptoms of mental illness vary from person to person and based on the specific illness. However, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) states that the following may be indications that an individual is struggling with their mental health:

- Excessive worry or fear
- Insecurity or lack of confidence
- Absent-mindedness
- Sadness
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating or learning
- Intense mood changes,
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoidance of friends and social interactions
- Withdrawal from work
- Difficulty relating to others or experiencing strained relationships
- Reacting inappropriately based on the situation
- Tiredness or lack of energy
- Detachment, indifference, or lacking motivation
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings
- Overuse of substances (alcohol or drugs)
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes
- Changes in appearance or hygiene
- Thoughts of suicide
- Presenteeism and/or absenteeism
- Inability to navigate daily activities, problems, or stress
- Missed deadlines, procrastination, indecisiveness, or slow productivity
- Afternoon fatigue
- Increase in accidents

STRATEGIES FOR OFFERING HELP

Information regarding mental health and support have become increasingly relevant to the craft beer community. Employers have a responsibility to be aware of what's going on with their teams, and teammates have a responsibility to check in with one another as well. And while having healthy boundaries is important, it's unrealistic to expect people to leave their "stuff" at home. People may unconsciously bring challenges they are dealing with privately to the workplace. There are several easily implemented strategies that can be used to support [mental health in the craft beer industry](#).

As Employers

- Lead by example. By talking about it as leaders, we are normalizing mental wellness for our team.
- Create [policies](#) that promote mental wellness and collaborate with your legal counsel.
- Empower employees to seek resources and make resources visible in the workplace.
- Provide/[offer workshops](#) on mental wellness in the workplace.
- Create a culture in which your employees feel comfortable bringing their whole self to work.

As Employees

- Maintain and enhance social networks beyond the workplace.
- Talk to your employer, or someone you feel comfortable with at work, about your mental health needs.
- Practice [Self Care](#).
- Speak up. Seek support when you experience a stigmatizing attitude or opinion.

As Teammates

- Support your teammates and encourage them to seek professional help when they are ready.
- Listen without judgment and offer support.
- Don't leave a teammate that may be in immediate danger alone. Seek help from a crisis center, emergency services, or a health-care professional.

- Check in with them to find out how they are doing.
- Advocate for a teammate if you see them experiencing a stigmatizing situation.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- Educate yourself about mental health issues and resources available in your community and make those resources available to your team.
- Come from a place of genuine, non-judgmental concern.
- Understand the ways that mental health can impact performance and offer support rather than placing blame.
- Give your full attention and engage in active listening.
- Ask if they need tangible support or a listening ear.
- Encourage your employee/teammate to explore their options, don't make demands.
- Respect boundaries and understand that an individual may not be ready to seek help or discuss their mental health with you.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mental health conditions may not always be apparent and may be mistaken for performance-related issues. Under federal law, mental disabilities have the same legal protections as physical disabilities. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), as well as the Fair Employment Practice Agency (FEPA), is tasked with enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was enacted to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities and create clear standards for addressing such discrimination. Other federal laws like the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) can be used to support an individual and their mental health if needed. It's important to check with your state regarding state-specific and local laws that protect employees from discrimination and consult with legal counsel to ensure your organization is properly supporting any claims raised.

AVAILABLE RESOURCE

SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
988	Suicide and crisis lifeline	Dial 9-8-8
Anxiety & Depression Association of America	Guidance on choosing a therapist	Visit website
Crisis Text Line	Anonymous 24/7 support for those in crisis.	Visit website Text MHA to 741741
Don't Call the Police: Community-based alternatives to police	Resources include housing guidance, LGBTQ+, domestic violence & sexual assault, youth, elders, crime, and substance abuse.	Visit website
Heard	Mental health and wellness for members of the food & beverage industry.	Visit website
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	24/7 support for people in distress.	Visit website
National Alliance on Mental Illness	Helpline for those that do not have insurance and need assistance with mental health issues	Visit website Dial 1-800-950-6264 Text NAMI to 741741

SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Assistance (SAMHSA)	National helpline. Confidential and staffed by professional volunteers that can help you through a crisis and connect you with local resources.	Visit website Dial 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
Student Health Centers	Operate on every federally funded college campus and offer no-cost referrals to students. University hospitals may provide free or discounted evaluations and care to uninsured people.	Check local federally funded colleges and universities.
The Trevor Project	Mental health resources for the LGBTQ+ community	Visit website
United Way	24/7 help accessing local resources.	Dial 2-1-1
Warmlines	Call to have a conversation with someone who can provide support during hard times.	Visit website
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Often provides limited counseling sessions at zero-cost to the employee to support their mental wellness.	Check with your employer to see if they offer an EAP.