

Resiliency is a buzz-word in the mental health community. But did you know it is an important ingredient for the workplace as well as for individuals? Resiliency allows us to respond to the challenges of life in our homes, families, and communities—including the workplace!

Resiliency

The President's New Freedom Commission report, *Achieving the Promise*, brought the key message that mental health is just as important to individuals as their physical health. This report challenges our communities—including our workplaces—to become resilient in the face of mental health challenges.

The results of developing resiliency and mental wellness in the workplace are increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, decreased short-term disability and less frequent turnover of employees. Paying attention to mental health is a win-win proposition for all who are involved.

Achieving the Promise goes on to define resiliency as “the personal and community qualities that enable us to rebound from adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or other stresses—and to go on with life with a sense of mastery, competence, and hope”. Resiliency is a key component to

mental wellness as well as to the overall productivity of our workplaces.

Resiliency in our workplaces improve our communities and the lives of individuals. If we believe that mental health is as important as physical health, workplaces can develop resiliency that promotes the best mental health possible among those who work at all levels, whether owner, administrator, manager or employee.

You may be asking yourself, “Why should I pay attention to mental health issues in my workplace when they don't affect me directly?” That is a valid question. Learning some significant facts

In The Workplace

about mental health can help to answer its underlying concerns.

Because one in twenty individuals in the workplace is affected by mental health challenges, mental health issues are already in all but a few workplaces. One in five families are affected by a psychiatric diagnosis. What we experience as individuals in our families and communities affects our work performance.

An employer or agency could imagine that mental health doesn't affect an individual work site. However, this would be ignoring the fact that statistically mental health challenges are too common to be absent from the workplace.

Even a small business with fewer than five employees deals with the larger world

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through customers and vendors or contracts with other businesses. We know from our daily conversations that friends and family members deal with mental health challenges and that such challenges are common in our communities.

Our work sites need to become resilient places in which those with mental health challenges are recognized for their essential contribution to society.

Here are some characteristics of workplace that have developed resiliency in the face of mental health challenges:

- The workplace is a safe environment to discuss mental health and to provide information about mental health concerns
- Those facing mental health challenges are valued in the workplace for their contributions. This message is consistent throughout all levels of the workplace
- Insurance coverage includes mental health services at a level that is equal to coverage for physical health. The cost savings of this policy are recognized
- Employee Assistance Programs have expanded their model beyond addressing individual worker needs. A broader model includes addressing mental health challenges where they occur in the workplace and connecting with the community at large
- Requests for accommodations in the workplace are recognized as a cost

saving step rather than as a burden to the employer

Resiliency is a vital characteristic of the work environment. Mental health is as important as physical health. Paying attention to mental health challenges within the workplace leads to the cost savings of greater productivity, decreased absenteeism, decreased short-term disability and less frequent turnover of employees. Paying attention to resiliency and mental health is a smart business plan.

If you are interested in having Dr. Mountain speak at your work site, ask for her talk Mental Health In The Workplace by calling 303.329.3364 or emailing her at beyondbipolar@mac.com.

Dr. Mountain also consults regarding mental health issues in the workplace. Check out her website: www.beyondbipolar.com.