

Belonging, Why It Matters



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Belonging is “the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.” - Cornell University

The sense of belonging impacts both our physical health and mental health, including preventing serious illness and outcomes, stress management and coping.

Social Connection includes the ways we connect, and the sense of connections we may experience. Groups can include many communities and organizations, including the workplace.

Culture of an organization:

- Rules of the road, spoken and unspoken
- Supports belonging, or deters
- No “one size fits all”
- Can be an indicator of a successful organization

The organization Achievers summarizes the **5 pillars of belonging** in the workplace as:

1. Welcomed
2. Known
3. Included
4. Supported
5. Connected

We all have a role to play in supporting the culture of belonging in the workplace.

The Surgeon General makes the following recommendations to foster connections:

- Make social connection a strategic priority
- Train, resource, and empower leaders and managers to promote connection
- Leverage existing training, orientation, and wellness resources
- Create practices and a workplace culture
- Put in place policies to protect work–life harmony
- Consider opportunities and challenges posed by flexible work hours/arrangements

For leaders and managers, modeling inclusive behavior, communicating expectations, connecting with employees and encouraging connections amongst staff can make a big difference.

All of us: From the words we use, to resolving conflicts, to offering gratitude and showing kindness, simple things can go a long way.

Mental Health and Mental Illnesses

Just like we all have physical health, we all have mental health, and 1 in 5 adults lives with a mental illness. Mental illnesses are biological in nature, and causes can include genetics, environment, life



NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults with mental illnesses and their families. NAMI Minnesota offers education, support and advocacy.



experiences, and trauma. How we view, talk about, treat, and manage our mental health can look different for everyone!

Recognizing some signs and symptoms of mental illnesses:

- Overly emotional
- Difficulty concentrating, memory issues
- Difficulty screening out stimuli
- Patterns of tardiness or absences
- Changes in stamina or pace, or meeting deadlines
- Difficulty in handling stress, time pressures, multiple tasks
- Physical problems including headaches, stomach ache, back pain without cause
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits
- Withdrawing socially

Resources to support our mental health:

- In the workplace, our role is to show care and connect to resources.
- Workplace benefits, including an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- NAMI Minnesota
- Warm Line
- Support Groups
- Educational Opportunities
- NAMI Crisis Resource Sheet

1. Sense of Belonging | Cornell University Diversity and Inclusion (2024). Retrieved from: <https://diversity.cornell.edu/belonging/sense-belonging>
2. Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation (2023) - Retrieved from: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
3. How belonging at work boosts everything (2024). Retrieved from https://discover.resources.achievers.com/shrm-building-belonging-2024/how-belonging-at-work-boosts-everything?utm_source=webinar&utm_medium=syndication&utm_campaign=Q124-JAN-WEB-Syndication-SHRM-Building-Sense-Belonging



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