# Five Ways to Support Employees through Storytelling

## How to harness the healing power of shared experiences to destigmatize mental health in the workplace

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People are often reluctant to discuss their mental health challenges, especially at work. Yet, study after study confirms that talking openly about one's emotional well-being can be a profoundly healing experience—and not just for the person speaking, but for those listening too.

Ginger's own [2021 Workforce Attitudes Study](#) shows that nearly 90 percent of employees want their leaders to speak out about mental health. Unfortunately, only 50 percent believe they're doing so.

Giving your employees the confidence and space to share their experiences can help to normalize mental health, change perceptions, reduce stress, and forge lasting bonds. In this short guide, Dana Udall, Ginger's Chief Clinical Officer, offers ideas for creating an open and supportive culture that encourages people to tell their stories.

# 1 Lead by example

Openness is contagious. When a role model or person of influence speaks candidly about their mental health, they open the door for others to share their stories too. Still, 56 percent of the CEOs we surveyed expressed concern that speaking openly about mental health might impact their credibility.

That said, leaders who are comfortable talking about their personal struggles with things like stress, anxiety, and fatigue can have a tremendous impact on how mental health issues are perceived in the workplace. By opening up about the day-to-day challenges they face and how they manage those challenges, leaders send a clear message to their employees: you're not alone and it's okay to ask for help.

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# 2 Telegraph a growth mindset

Strong leaders often frame business setbacks as opportunities, and research shows that casting mental challenges in the same light can go a long way toward creating a more open and supportive workplace environment.

We all hit the wall from time to time, but recognizing that we can not only manage our struggles, but also learn and grow from them is key. By telegraphing a growth mindset, business leaders can help inspire a more engaged and resilient workforce.

# 3 — Facilitate dialogue around mental health

It's important to encourage people to discuss mental health in appropriate settings, and in ways that feel safe and respect personal boundaries. Here are a few ideas for how to get people talking:

- Build a wellness champion network inside your organization. This [how-to article by SHRM](#) provides helpful guidelines for recruiting passionate role models who possess the communication and leadership skills to effectively motivate others.
- Create slack channels focused on self-care.
- Remind staff about the mental health benefits your organization offers.

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# 4 — Manage with compassion

While it's impossible to eliminate stress in our lives, we can find ways to deal with it—and managers can help by:

- Acknowledging stressful periods at work (e.g., new product rollouts, aggressive deadlines, hypergrowth, etc.)
- Checking in with team members regularly to find out how they're feeling about—and dealing with—workplace pressure
- Offering concrete strategies to help employees feel supported:
  - Encourage them to take time off
  - Provide training on things like organizational skills or prioritization
  - Offer flexible work schedules
  - Reduce their workload

# 5 Learn from each other

It's important to create opportunities for managers to come together, learn from each other, and gain strategies for dealing with complex issues. Because we are social creatures, and so much of our learning takes place in the context of relationships, hearing how others have managed tough situations—such as conversations with employees who are struggling—can be extremely helpful.

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To learn more about the power of storytelling in mental health, check out our library of Ginger Chats, designed to inspire healing and growth: ginger.com/chats