



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: BREAKING THE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

Recently U.S. Senator John Fetterman checked himself into a hospital for clinical depression, exposing a vulnerability that high profile individuals usually keep to themselves. His decision was highly publicized and judged. He did it because he is committed to being the best version of himself possible. We view this as a sign of strength, self-awareness, and commitment to his stakeholders.

Seeking mental health care will often lead to positive outcomes in situations where there could have been disastrous outcomes if no treatment or support had been pursued. So why then are so many people reluctant to seek help for their mental health? There is still often a stigma and sense of shame related to admitting the need for help.

We hope the Senator's actions will reduce the stigma. As more highly effective people show they too need help sometimes, the stigma associated with asking for help begins to go away. Just look at AA. Many prominent actors (e.g., Anthony Hopkins, and many more) lead by example. This makes it easier for others.

Most people find sharing physical health issues with colleagues relatively easy, while they are likely to be reluctant to share mental health issues. Also, most of us have no problem discussing the most personal aspects of our physical health with our doctors but tend to be less willing to share personal aspects of our lives, even though opening up to a mental health professional can be very beneficial to our overall well-being.

Here are four ways you can make it easy for your team members to get the support they need without shame, embarrassment or fear:

1. Understand the policy around mental health in your organization and ensure your team members understand it also
2. Talk about how you seek help (if you do)
3. Bring the EAP or HR into a team meeting and let them tell the team about the options without calling anyone out
4. Share symptoms of what might be a physical manifestation of a stress-related issue

In therapy, people explore emotions, behaviors and thought patterns that may be getting in the way of their achieving positive life goals—each person's desired outcomes from therapy will be unique. Here are seven common signals someone might want to seek mental health support:

1. Difficulty focusing on work, home and family obligations, or even just reading
2. Feeling overwhelmed
3. Not sleeping well
4. Experiencing debilitating anxiety or unrelenting sadness
5. Chronic headaches or chest pains
6. Withdrawal from friends, family, coworkers/isolation
7. Overeating, gambling, or reliance on alcohol or other substances

If any of these or any other troubling symptoms are affecting the quality of your life, now is a good time to consider seeking therapy or other kind of support.

Resources and more information:

- [Executive Vitality™: Reversing the Stigma Of Mental Health Struggles « Executive Coaching Network](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Psychology Today - Find a Therapist, Psychologist, Counselor](#)