

Mental Health at Work: Make Support Usable

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 6, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

Support works better when people can use it. A phone number on a poster will not fix an impossible workload or an unavailable supervisor. Check both the work conditions and the route to a private conversation.

Objective: Identify one practical work improvement and verify an accessible private support route.

Key hazards or failure points

Unmanageable demands; no relief; fear of speaking up; support unavailable on the shift; forced disclosure; treating distress as a character flaw; an unclear crisis route.

Practical controls

- Ask what work condition is creating difficulty today. Adjust priorities, staffing, time, tools or break coverage through the responsible leader. Do not make personal disclosure a condition of improving the work.
- Offer a private conversation and explain available support, including the employee assistance program if one exists. Listen respectfully and connect people with appropriate help; supervisors do not diagnose or provide treatment.
- Keep current US crisis contacts accessible: call or text 988 for emotional distress or suicidal crisis; call 911 for an immediate life-threatening or medical emergency. Know the local response arrangements.

Verify It in the Field

Name the work change agreed today and confirm the responsible person has actually arranged it. Ask when the crew will check whether it helped. A promise to “manage stress” is not an operational change.

Open the actual support information and check its contact details, hours and access process. Provide a usable alternative if there is no employee assistance program. Do not place a test call to a crisis line.

Ask workers how to request a private conversation and whom to contact if the first person is unavailable. Record work changes and access gaps only. Keep diagnoses, personal stories and help-seeking details off the attendance and field sheets.

Stop and reassess

Pause exposure when distress prevents safe task performance and arrange private support. For immediate danger, obtain emergency help; remain supportive if safe without entering danger yourself. Use 988 for crisis support and 911 for life-threatening emergencies. Do not require a diagnosis before helping.

Ask the crew

1. Which work demand needs a practical change today?
2. How can someone reach support privately on this shift?
3. Who checks whether the agreed change helped?

Today's check: fix one work barrier and confirm the support route.

Sources: CDC worker mental-health support; OSHA supervisor checklist; NIMH help guidance.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.