

AS@W...FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Why should managers and supervisors be concerned with workplace mental health?

Informed organizations are increasingly becoming aware of the personal and productivity costs of mental ill health, and the associated importance of fostering and maintaining the mental health of their employees. **Managers and other supervisory personnel are in a key position to note and act on changes in employee performance or behaviour that may be harbingers of a mental health disorder such as depression.** However, awareness is not enough; employers also have a need and desire for good information and tools that can assist them and their employees when such concerns are raised. AS@W is such a tool for employees with low mood or depression. **AS@W provides clear, confidential and practical information and suggestions for employees to address mood problems, particularly as they show up at work.** AS@W can be made available on its own, or preferably in conjunction with complementary programs or policies intended to support employees' mental health and wellness.

Who would find AS@W of value?

There are a number of employees who may benefit from the availability of AS@W:

- New employees who are entering the organization and/or workforce and want to know about available resources and supports.
- Current staff that may be at risk for low mood or depression due to personal risk factors (e.g. being a new parent) or workplace risk factors (e.g. taking on a new position).
- Workers who are exhibiting workplace behaviours or performance concerns that may be due to low mood or depression.
- Individuals who have clinical depression and would benefit from additional treatment resources.
- Employees who are returning to work after a depression-related absence.
- Individuals who are concerned about the mood and well-being of a colleague or loved one.
- Staff who have recovered from depression but want to maintain good self-care in order to prevent or minimize relapse.



AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work: Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

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How can managers and supervisors use AS@W?

- Provide information about AS@W when interviewing and orienting new staff members, along with information about other company programs, policies and procedures. Information, such as brochures or contact cards, about AS@W can be included in the orientation materials about company programs and benefits that are provided to prospective or new employees.
- Inform the employee about AS@W as a helpful tool if he or she informs you of personal challenges with low mood or depression. This may serve to help the employee function in a productive and safe manner, and avoid undue decline in functioning and associated disability.
- An employee who is using AS@W may choose to collaborate with his or her manager or supervisor on some of the exercises in the workbook. For example, an employee who would benefit from being more assertive in a workplace relationship could review possible behaviours and rehearse them with their manager.
- Consider informing employees about AS@W when accidents, incidents or changes in employee attendance, performance or other behaviour are observed, as these may be signs of low mood or depression. The intent is not to suggest that an employee is depressed, but rather to indicate appropriate concern and to offer support and resources.
- AS@W can be used to assist with planning and implementing a successful work return. This might include problem-solving how to deal with potential stress that will be encountered during the return, determining appropriate accommodations and developing a joint plan to identify and manage possible relapse.

Key considerations for managers and supervisors

- The role of a manager or supervisor is not to diagnose or treat depression.** This would be inappropriate, invasive and potentially destructive. Employee privacy and confidentiality must be respected.
- AS@W is not intended as a substitute for provision of mental health care.** Nor is it in lieu of other organizational programs and services that are relevant to employee mental health, such as Employee and Family Assistance or extended health plans.
- Managers, supervisors and other concerned personnel benefit from education and training programs to raise awareness, reduce stigma and enhance skills in addressing workplace mental health. AS@W can be a core component of such training.



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- ❑ Employees' level of stress and overall mental health may be impacted by myriad of factors, including the mental health of their loved ones. Employees may benefit from receiving the AS@W or other self-care materials (e.g., on teen depression, suicide) to enhance their knowledge and provide practical assistance.
- ❑ Organizations benefit from creating and sustaining psychologically healthy workplaces that have a culture that supports everyone to work together guided by values of respect, growth and integrity in order to promote both productivity and well-being.
- ❑ Anyone within an organization may suffer from depression or low mood; in fact the demands of leadership can be an added risk. Managers and supervisors should be mindful about their psychological health and model good self-care. AS@W can help.

Further Reading

Bilsker, D., Gilbert, M., Myette, L., Stewart-Patterson, Chris. (2004). *Depression and work function: Bridging the gap between mental health and the workplace*. Vancouver, BC: Mental Health Evaluation and Community Consultation Unit. Available at: http://www.carmha.ca/publications/resources/dwf/Work_Depression.pdf

Canadian Centre for Management Development. (2002). *A fine balance: A manager's guide to workplace well-being*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canada School of Public Service. Available at: http://www.myschool-monecole.gc.ca/research/publications/html/workplace/wp_1_e.html

Health and Safety Executive. (2002). *Work-related stress: A short guide*. Suffolk, United Kingdom: Health and Safety Books. Available at: <http://www.mcm.ed.ac.uk/HandS/indq281%5B1%5D%20managers.pdf>



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ABOUT AS@W

How was *Antidepressant Skills at Work* developed?

The guide was developed by British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The guide and accompanying materials have been authored by **Dr. Dan Bilsker**, **Dr. Merv Gilbert**, and **Dr. Joti Samra** – registered psychologists and scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to workplace mental health. These psychologists are with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. The guide was written on the basis of a review of the scientific literature; consultation with employer, union, mental health provider and employee groups; and adaptation of existing self-care depression programs.

How can the manual be accessed?

The manual is available for viewing and free download at www.carmha.ca, under Publications and Workplace Mental Health or from www.bcmhas.ca/research. Individuals or organizations are free to print and make multiple copies of the guide, with permission from CARMHA (publications@carmha.ca). Print copies and audio CDs are available at a low cost from Rebel Communications (604-214-9695 or 1-866-678-5484 or info@rebelcom.ca).

For further information about AS@W and associated resources and materials, please visit www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/. This information will be updated on a regular basis.



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