BCG

Weekly Brief

Let's Talk About Mental Health

This week, I'm passing the Weekly Brief to Alicia Pittman, BCG's Global People Chair, so she can share her insights on mental health in honor of World Mental Health Day. As I've written before, this is a topic close to my heart and I think one that deserves attention from business leaders—as well as action!

—Christoph

Today, mental health is more openly discussed in the workplace, but it wasn't always this way. For years, issues such as depression, anxiety, and burnout were stigmatized, leaving employees hesitant to speak up for fear it might impact their careers. Thankfully, the tide is turning. As corporate leaders, elite athletes, and public figures openly share their own struggles, others feel more at liberty to do the same.

Last week's World Mental Health Day theme, "Mental Health at Work," provided an important reminder of how essential it is to continue this dialogue and work on practical solutions.

At BCG, we marked the occasion with two global town halls where several of our colleagues courageously shared their personal journeys. Some talked about starting their careers while managing mental health challenges, while others confronted them mid-career. The sessions were moderated by Grant Freeland, former global leader of BCG's People and Organization practice, a pioneer in advancing mental health support at BCG. Grant continues this work today in his role as an adjunct lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Hearing these stories was an important reminder of the power of vulnerability. Many participants expressed gratitude simply for the space to have these conversations, noting that hearing others' experiences inspired them to seek the support they need.

Colleagues discussed a range of conditions, including addiction, grief, stress, and imposter syndrome. They also shared strategies for managing mental health, such as recognizing triggers, practicing mindfulness, incorporating sleep, exercise, and other self-care routines into their day—and knowing when to seek professional help.

What I'm taking away—and I hope it is helpful for you too:

1. **We need to tackle both the supply and demand sides of mental health support.** It's clear that access to professional resources, manager training, and leave benefits is necessary but not sufficient. We must also work to continue to break the stigma around mental health. Creating safe spaces for employees to speak openly and feel supported can encourage them to seek help. And a little goes a long way.
2. **Company culture matters—a lot.** An inclusive, purpose-driven culture is one of the most effective ways to support our employees' well-being. Research from Sapien Labs shows that strong relationships at work and a sense of pride and purpose are linked to better mental health outcomes and that work culture has a far greater impact on mental well-being than structural aspects of the job such as flexible hours.

I'm committed to supporting mental health programs at BCG, and I hope you'll do the same in your own teams and communities. One conversation can change someone's day. Many conversations change culture—and ensure more people get the support they need.

Regards,
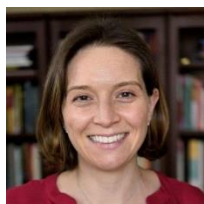
Alicia Pittman
Global People Chair

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