

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

# Ending Mental Health Stigma at Work

A Culture Change Programme for Indian Organisations

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

UDYAM-MP-10-0120839



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## Programme Overview

In India, the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health at work prevents a significant majority of employees from seeking necessary support. This programme is designed to fundamentally shift workplace culture, moving beyond mere awareness to foster genuine acceptance and open dialogue.

### Learning Objectives

- ✓ Participants will gain a deep understanding of how mental health stigma manifests in Indian professional settings and its detrimental impact on individuals and organisations. This knowledge is crucial for identifying and dismantling unhelpful attitudes.
- ✓ Participants will learn why informational campaigns alone are insufficient for reducing stigma and understand the power of personal stories and direct interaction in fostering empathy and breaking down barriers. This approach promotes deeper, more lasting change.
- ✓ Participants will acquire practical skills in using sensitive and supportive language when discussing mental well-being, enabling them to communicate more effectively and compassionately in the workplace. This competence is vital for creating a safe environment.
- ✓ Participants will recognise the profound influence of leadership in shaping workplace culture and learn how senior leaders can effectively model vulnerability and openness about mental health. This empowers leaders to be catalysts for change.
- ✓ Participants will be equipped with strategies to contribute to a workplace culture where it is acceptable to acknowledge struggles and seek help without fear of judgment or reprisal. This fosters psychological safety for all employees.
- ✓ Participants will understand the importance of measuring anti-stigma efforts and learn how to track progress, ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of workplace mental well-being initiatives. This data-driven approach supports continuous improvement.

#### WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for all employees across an organisation, with specific modules tailored for leadership to ensure comprehensive culture change from the top down.

## Programme Content

### 1. Understanding Mental Health Stigma in Indian Workplaces

This module explores the unique ways mental health stigma presents itself within the Indian professional landscape, including cultural nuances and societal pressures. We will examine how these attitudes can lead to discrimination, exclusion, and a reluctance to seek help, significantly impacting employee morale and productivity. You will learn to recognise subtle and overt forms of stigma and understand their underlying causes. The session provides evidence-based insights into why addressing this pervasive issue is critical for fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment.

 **Activity: Small group discussion on identifying workplace stigma scenarios.**

### 2. Contact-Based Anti-Stigma: Beyond Information Alone

While awareness campaigns have their place, this section delves into the science behind contact-based interventions, demonstrating why direct interaction and personal stories are far more effective in reducing prejudice. You will understand how exposure to individuals with lived experience, when facilitated safely, can humanise mental health challenges and foster empathy. We will discuss practical ways to integrate contact-based strategies into workplace initiatives, moving from passive learning to active engagement. This approach is key to creating genuine attitudinal shifts and building a more compassionate organisational culture.

 **Activity: Paired sharing of personal reflections on overcoming biases.**

### 3. Language Matters: Mental Health Communication Guide

The words we use have immense power, especially when discussing sensitive topics like mental health. This module provides a practical guide to adopting person-first and non-judgmental language in all workplace communications. You will learn to avoid stigmatising terms and phrases, and instead, use language that promotes understanding and respect. We will explore how adopting mindful communication can create a safer space for employees to express their concerns. Mastering this aspect of communication is essential for building trust and encouraging open dialogue about mental well-being.

 **Activity: Role-playing exercises with corrected communication scenarios.**

#### 4. Leadership Role Modelling: Sharing Lived Experiences

Leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organisational culture, and their willingness to openly discuss their own mental health journeys can be transformative. This section explores the impact of authentic leadership vulnerability in normalising mental health conversations and reducing stigma. You will learn strategies for leaders to share their experiences in a way that is empowering and safe for both them and their teams. By witnessing leaders demonstrate courage and openness, employees feel more comfortable seeking support themselves, fostering a culture of psychological safety from the top.

 **Activity: Leadership panel discussion on authentic vulnerability.**

#### 5. Building a Workplace Where It Is Safe to Not Be Okay

This module focuses on creating systemic changes that embed psychological safety into the fabric of the organisation. We will discuss practical policies, support structures, and everyday practices that signal to employees that it is acceptable to experience difficulties and seek assistance without fear of negative consequences. You will learn how to foster an environment where vulnerability is seen as a strength, not a weakness. Building this culture ensures that employees feel valued and supported, leading to increased engagement and well-being.

 **Activity: Brainstorming session on actionable workplace support initiatives.**

#### 6. Measuring Anti-Stigma Impact

To ensure the sustained success of our anti-stigma efforts, it is crucial to measure our progress and impact. This section introduces evidence-based methods for assessing changes in attitudes, behaviours, and the overall mental health climate within the organisation. You will learn how to utilise surveys, focus groups, and other tools to gather meaningful data. Understanding these measurement techniques allows us to refine our strategies and demonstrate the tangible benefits of investing in a mentally healthy workplace. This data-driven approach ensures accountability and continuous improvement.

 **Activity: Group activity: Designing a simple pre- and post-programme survey.**

## Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Communicate programme launch and objectives to all employees.	HR/Manager	Week 1	Ensure clear messaging that emphasizes the anti-stigma focus and benefits for all.
Conduct initial leadership module training.	HR	Month 1	Focus on role modelling and creating a safe environment for leaders to share.
Roll out core employee workshops focusing on stigma and language.	Manager	Week 2	Facilitate interactive sessions that encourage participation and open discussion.
Implement a communication policy update emphasizing sensitive language.	HR	Month 1	Provide practical examples and guidelines for all internal communications.
Establish employee resource groups or buddy systems for support.	HR/Manager	Month 2	Pilot programmes that encourage peer support and informal check-ins.
Develop and administer post-programme anti-stigma survey.	Leadership	Quarter 1	Utilize survey data to identify areas of success and further intervention needs.

## About Manas



### Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Founder & Consulting Psychologist | Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist | PhD | 18+ Years

Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma brings 18+ years of applied psychology to corporate wellness. She has worked with SBI, educational institutions, and corporate teams across India. Her evidence-based approach combines CBT, mindfulness, and culturally contextualised psychology for measurable outcomes. She is the creator of the Performance FOMO Index™ and the High-Functioning Distress Framework™.

### Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

A MSME-registered organisation dedicated to evidence-based mental wellness.

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