

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

Supporting Employees with Addiction – A Manager's Guide

Compassionate, Legally Sound Approaches for People Managers

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

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Programme Overview

Addiction significantly impacts all workplaces, yet many managers feel unprepared and apprehensive about addressing it. This programme equips you with the knowledge and skills to approach these sensitive situations with confidence and compassion.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Understand addiction as a health-related concern, shifting the perspective from a disciplinary issue to one requiring support and understanding. This knowledge empowers you to respond more effectively and empathetically.
- ✓ Develop practical strategies for initiating supportive conversations with employees who may be struggling with addiction. Learning these communication techniques will enable you to foster trust and encourage help-seeking behaviour.
- ✓ Identify appropriate workplace adjustments and understand the vital role of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) in supporting employees. Knowing these resources allows you to provide tangible assistance and facilitate access to professional help.
- ✓ Grasp the nuances of fitness for work assessments and understand your legal responsibilities as a manager. This awareness ensures you are acting within legal frameworks while prioritizing employee well-being and workplace safety.
- ✓ Learn to differentiate between situations requiring performance management and those where supportive interventions are more appropriate. Developing this discernment is crucial for fair and effective employee management.
- ✓ Gain confidence in creating a supportive workplace environment that reduces stigma surrounding addiction and encourages open communication. This fosters a culture of care and psychological safety for all team members.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for all people managers and HR business partners who play a crucial role in employee support and performance.

Programme Content

1. Understanding Addiction as a Health Issue

It is vital to reframe addiction not as a moral failing or a disciplinary matter, but as a complex health challenge influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. Recognizing it as a health issue allows for a more compassionate and effective approach. When addiction affects an employee, it can manifest in various ways, including inconsistent performance, increased absenteeism, or changes in behaviour. This session will guide you in understanding the underlying mechanisms of addiction and how to approach employees from a place of support rather than judgment, utilizing evidence-based insights into recovery.

 **Activity: Group discussion on common misconceptions about addiction in the workplace.**

2. Approaching a Concerned Conversation

Initiating a conversation about potential addiction requires sensitivity and careful planning. This section will provide you with a structured approach to express your concerns constructively, focusing on observed behaviours and their impact on work, rather than making assumptions about the individual's substance use. We will explore empathetic communication techniques, active listening skills, and how to create a safe space for the employee to share their challenges, thereby encouraging them to seek necessary help.

 **Activity: Role-playing exercise: practicing supportive conversation scenarios.**

3. Reasonable Adjustments and EAP Referrals

Supporting employees with addiction often involves making reasonable adjustments to their work environment or schedule where feasible, to aid their recovery process. Crucially, this section will highlight the invaluable role of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) as confidential resources offering professional counselling and support. Understanding how to refer employees to these services ensures they receive expert guidance and assistance, facilitating their journey towards well-being and sustained recovery.

 **Activity: null**

4. Fitness for Work Assessments and Legal Obligations

Navigating fitness for work assessments requires a clear understanding of legal frameworks and company policies. This session will clarify when such assessments are necessary, focusing on the impact of an employee's condition on their ability to perform their duties safely and effectively. We will discuss your legal obligations in maintaining a safe workplace while respecting employee privacy and rights, ensuring all actions are compliant with Indian employment law and ethical considerations.

 **Activity: Case study analysis of fitness for work scenarios.**

5. Performance Management vs. Supportive Intervention

A critical aspect of management is discerning when performance issues stem from an addiction challenge requiring support, versus when they necessitate formal performance management. This section will equip you with the tools to evaluate these situations, emphasizing that the primary goal should be to support recovery and return to effective work. We will explore how to apply performance management constructively when necessary, ensuring it is fair, consistent, and focused on improvement, while always prioritizing the employee's well-being and potential for recovery.

 **Activity: Group exercise: differentiating management approaches for various scenarios.**

6. Building a Supportive Workplace Culture

Creating an environment where employees feel safe to discuss personal challenges, including addiction, is paramount. This session will focus on proactive strategies to reduce stigma, promote mental wellness awareness, and foster a culture of empathy and support. By understanding the impact of stigma and learning how to champion an open dialogue, you can contribute significantly to a healthier and more productive workplace for everyone.

 **Activity: Brainstorming session: initiatives to reduce workplace stigma.**

Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Communicate the company's stance on addiction as a health issue to all employees.	HR/Manager	Week 1	Distribute a clear, empathetic statement via internal communication channels.
Ensure all managers are aware of and can easily access EAP contact information and referral procedures.	HR	Month 1	Create a readily available digital resource for managers.
Schedule mandatory 'Supportive Conversations' training for all people managers.	Manager	Week 2	Integrate practical role-playing and scenario-based learning.
Review and update existing policies on performance management to include guidelines for addiction-related issues.	HR	Month 1	Consult with legal counsel to ensure compliance.
Organize a company-wide awareness campaign on mental wellness and addiction support resources.	HR/Manager	Month 2	Utilize internal newsletters, posters, and intranet for dissemination.
Establish a confidential feedback mechanism for managers to report challenges and share best practices in supporting employees.	Leadership	Quarter 1	Implement a secure channel for anonymous reporting and discussion.

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™.

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

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Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma — Founder & Consulting Psychologist (Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist, PhD, 18+ years), Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling (UDYAM-MP-10-0120839). Content is for programme overview and educational purposes only. Nothing herein constitutes legal advice regarding POSH Act compliance — organisations should consult qualified legal counsel for specific legal guidance. For clinical or psychological support, please reach out to the Manas Team for personalised guidance, or consult a qualified Psychiatrist or licensed mental health professional. © 2026 Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling. All rights reserved. Confidential — prepared specifically for the named organisation. For queries: manu@manas365.com | +91 99818 13224