

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

# Workplace Mental Health Crisis Intervention

What to Do When a Team Member Is in Distress

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

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## Programme Overview

This programme equips managers and HR professionals with the essential skills to recognise and respond to acute mental health crises in the workplace. Participants will learn evidence-based strategies to provide immediate support, ensure safety, and facilitate appropriate referrals, thereby fostering a more supportive and resilient work environment.

## Learning Objectives

- ✓ Understand the critical differences between everyday workplace stress and acute mental health crises, allowing for timely and appropriate intervention. This understanding is vital for preventing escalation and ensuring individuals receive the correct support.
- ✓ Master immediate response protocols, including effective communication techniques and de-escalation strategies, to ensure safety and provide comfort during a crisis. Knowing what to say and, importantly, what not to say can significantly impact the outcome.
- ✓ Learn to navigate referral pathways and connect individuals with appropriate internal and external resources, ensuring they receive professional assistance. This objective highlights the importance of a structured approach to seeking specialized help.
- ✓ Develop strategies for supporting employees returning to work after a mental health episode, fostering a smooth reintegration and preventing relapse. This focus on post-crisis care is crucial for long-term well-being and productivity.
- ✓ Gain insights into safeguarding the well-being of the wider team during and after a crisis, mitigating potential impacts on morale and productivity. Protecting the team's mental health is a shared responsibility that requires proactive management.
- ✓ Build confidence in managing sensitive situations with empathy and professionalism, creating a psychologically safer workplace for everyone. This objective underscores the role of leadership in cultivating a culture of care and support.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for all managers, HR professionals, senior leadership, and safety officers who play a role in supporting employee well-being and managing workplace incidents.

## Programme Content

### 1. Recognising Crisis vs. Stress

This section will help participants distinguish between normal workplace pressures and more serious mental health challenges that may require immediate attention. We will explore common indicators of acute distress and understand how stress can manifest differently from a crisis situation. Recognizing these signs early is crucial for initiating the right support mechanisms and preventing potential harm to the individual and the team. Participants will learn to observe behavioural changes, communication patterns, and emotional expressions that signal a need for intervention. Understanding these nuances allows for a more precise and effective response.

 **Activity: Group discussion on identifying stress vs. crisis scenarios.**

### 2. Immediate Response Protocol: What to Say and Not Say

During an acute mental health crisis, immediate actions and words can have a profound impact. This section focuses on a clear, step-by-step protocol for responding safely and supportively. We will cover active listening techniques, empathetic communication, and how to de-escalate intense emotions without judgment. Conversely, participants will learn about phrases and actions that can inadvertently worsen a situation. The goal is to equip managers with practical skills to provide a calming presence and immediate assistance while ensuring the safety of all involved. This protocol is designed to be actionable and reassuring in high-pressure moments.

 **Activity: Role-playing common crisis communication scenarios.**

### 3. Referral and Support Pathway

Once immediate safety is ensured, connecting individuals with appropriate professional help is paramount. This section outlines how to effectively utilize internal Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), external mental health services, and emergency resources. Participants will learn how to make a referral sensitively and confidentially, respecting the individual's privacy while advocating for their well-being. We will discuss the importance of a structured pathway to ensure that support is timely and comprehensive, covering various levels of need from counselling to crisis intervention. Understanding these pathways empowers managers to act as effective facilitators of care.

 **Activity: Mapping available internal and external support resources.**

#### 4. Post-Crisis Support: Returning to Work

Supporting an employee's return to the workplace after experiencing a mental health crisis requires careful planning and empathy. This section addresses strategies for facilitating a smooth reintegration, including discussing reasonable accommodations, setting expectations, and maintaining confidentiality. We will explore how to foster a supportive environment that encourages the employee's recovery and prevents stigma. The focus is on creating a phased return if necessary and ensuring that the employee feels valued and understood, which is critical for sustained well-being and productivity. This proactive approach aids in long-term employee retention and engagement.

 **Activity: Case study analysis of return-to-work scenarios.**

#### 5. Protecting the Team's Well-being

A workplace crisis can affect the entire team, impacting morale, productivity, and overall psychological safety. This section provides guidance on how managers can support their team members during and after a critical incident. We will discuss transparent communication strategies (while respecting confidentiality), managing team anxieties, and reinforcing a culture of mutual support. The aim is to equip leaders with the tools to maintain team cohesion and resilience, ensuring that the incident does not lead to prolonged distress or disruption for others. Proactive team care is essential for organizational health.

 **Activity: Developing a team communication plan for crisis situations.**

#### 6. Building a Mentally Healthy Workplace Culture

This final section synthesizes the learnings by focusing on proactive measures to cultivate a workplace culture that prioritizes mental well-being. We will explore how to embed supportive practices into daily operations, encourage open conversations about mental health, and reduce stigma. Participants will learn about the role of leadership in championing mental wellness initiatives and creating an environment where seeking help is seen as a strength. Building this culture is an ongoing process that requires commitment from all levels of the organization, leading to increased employee engagement and reduced absenteeism.

 **Activity: Brainstorming long-term mental wellness initiatives.**

## Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Develop and disseminate a clear workplace crisis response policy and procedure document.	HR/Leadership	Week 1	Ensure the policy includes contact information for internal and external support services.
Integrate mental health crisis response training into the onboarding process for all new managers.	HR	Month 1	Mandate completion of the core training module for all managerial staff.
Establish a confidential and easily accessible referral system for employees needing mental health support.	Manager	Week 2	Regularly update contact details for EAPs and local mental health providers.
Schedule regular check-ins with employees returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health concerns.	HR	Month 1	Focus these check-ins on support and reintegration, not performance evaluation.
Organize team debriefing sessions following any significant workplace incident to address collective concerns.	HR/Manager	Month 2	Facilitate these sessions in a safe and supportive environment, allowing for open sharing.
Promote mental health awareness through internal communications and activities throughout the year.	Leadership	Quarter 1	Include resources and information on mental well-being in company newsletters and intranet.

## 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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