

# DISMANTLING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA IN THE WORKPLACE

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# Mental Health ...



*Center for Disease Control and Prevention - 2024*

Includes our emotional,  
psychological, and  
social well-being.

It affects how we think, feel, and act...  
handle stress,  
relate to others  
make healthy choices.

Important at every stage of life.

A mentally health person is able to have the full range of emotions.

# Persistent Patterns

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50% of employees who need mental health services never seek them.

Those that do, wait 9 years on average.

1 out of 10 employees suffers in silence with an unaddressed mental health issue.

*Center for WorkPlace Mental Health, 2023*

# Why?

## Many Reasons:

- Don't recognize symptoms
- "Don't know how to describe it"
- Don't understand treatment

Ignorance is a  
strong foundation

- Shame /embarrassment
- Fear of discrimination (40%)

Stigma

- Lack of resources
- Access difficult

As a culture, we under  
value mental health

## Can you witness stigma?

- Private moment
- Often subconscious
- Rarely spoken



## What Exactly is Stigma?

*What are we solving for?*

# Mental Health Stigma



1. Public stigma
2. Self-stigma
3. Institutional stigma

The negative or discriminatory attitudes that **others** may have about mental illness.

Internalized shame, that people with mental health challenges have about their **own** condition.

**Organizational** policies and practices that intentionally or unintentionally limit opportunities for people with mental health conditions.

*What are we solving for?*

*What can employers control?*

American Psychiatric Association, 2024



# Why The Difference?

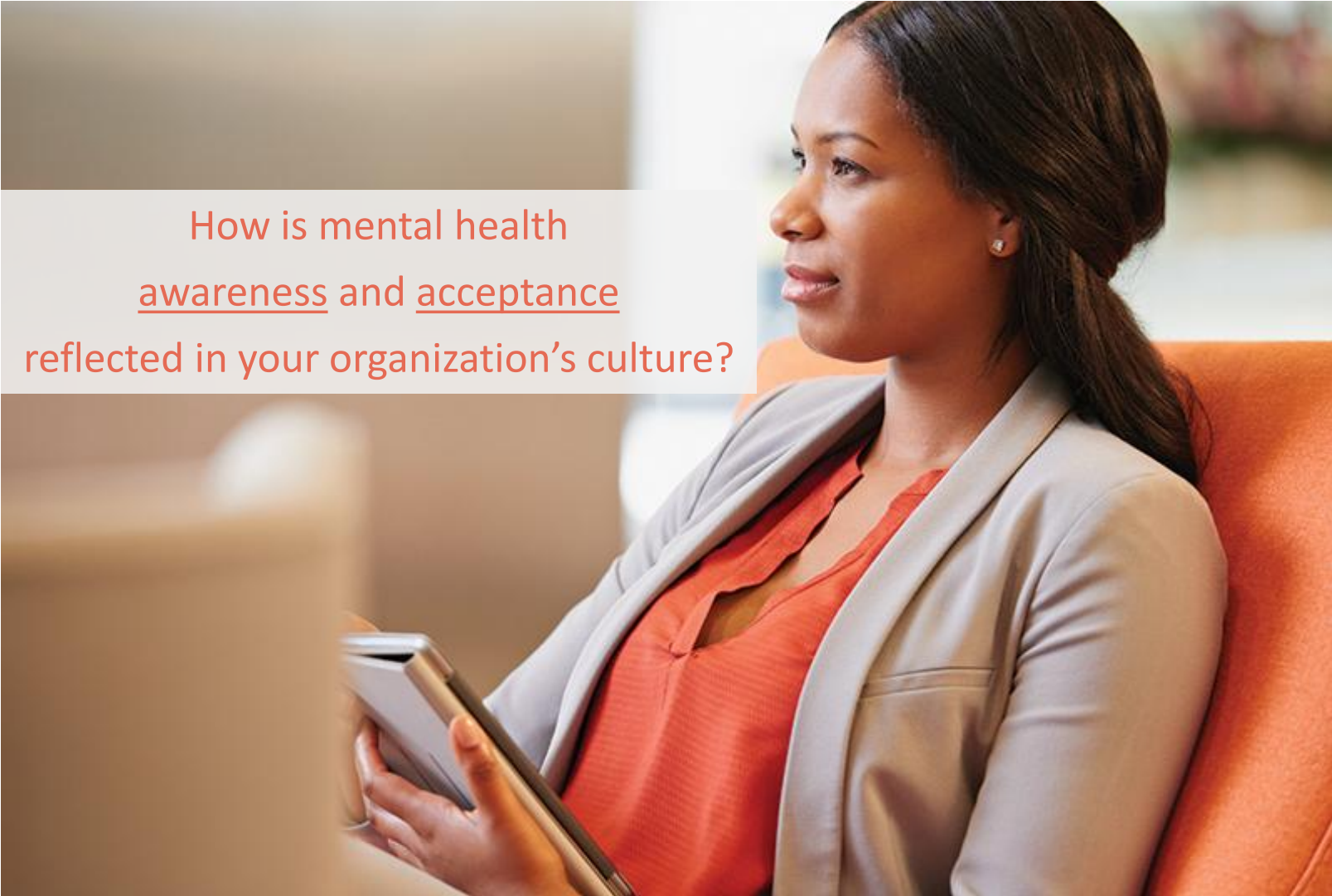


Case utilization:	1-4 %	15-20 %
Full Program Engagement:	8-12%	45-65%

25<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> Percentile

# It's In Our Culture

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How is mental health awareness and acceptance reflected in your organization's culture?



# Please Consider Your Org's Culture



- Common norms, values, and beliefs of individuals within that group.

What are the prevailing attitudes about emotional/mental health issues?

How are these reflected and communicated?

What evidence do you have?

- Shared expectations for how to do things (behavior & performance).

Is it acceptable for someone to have personal challenges that impact work?

What are the expectations for how someone should handle this situation?

Do people make known what they are dealing with today?

- The summation of employees' experience within an organization.

Am I safe here?

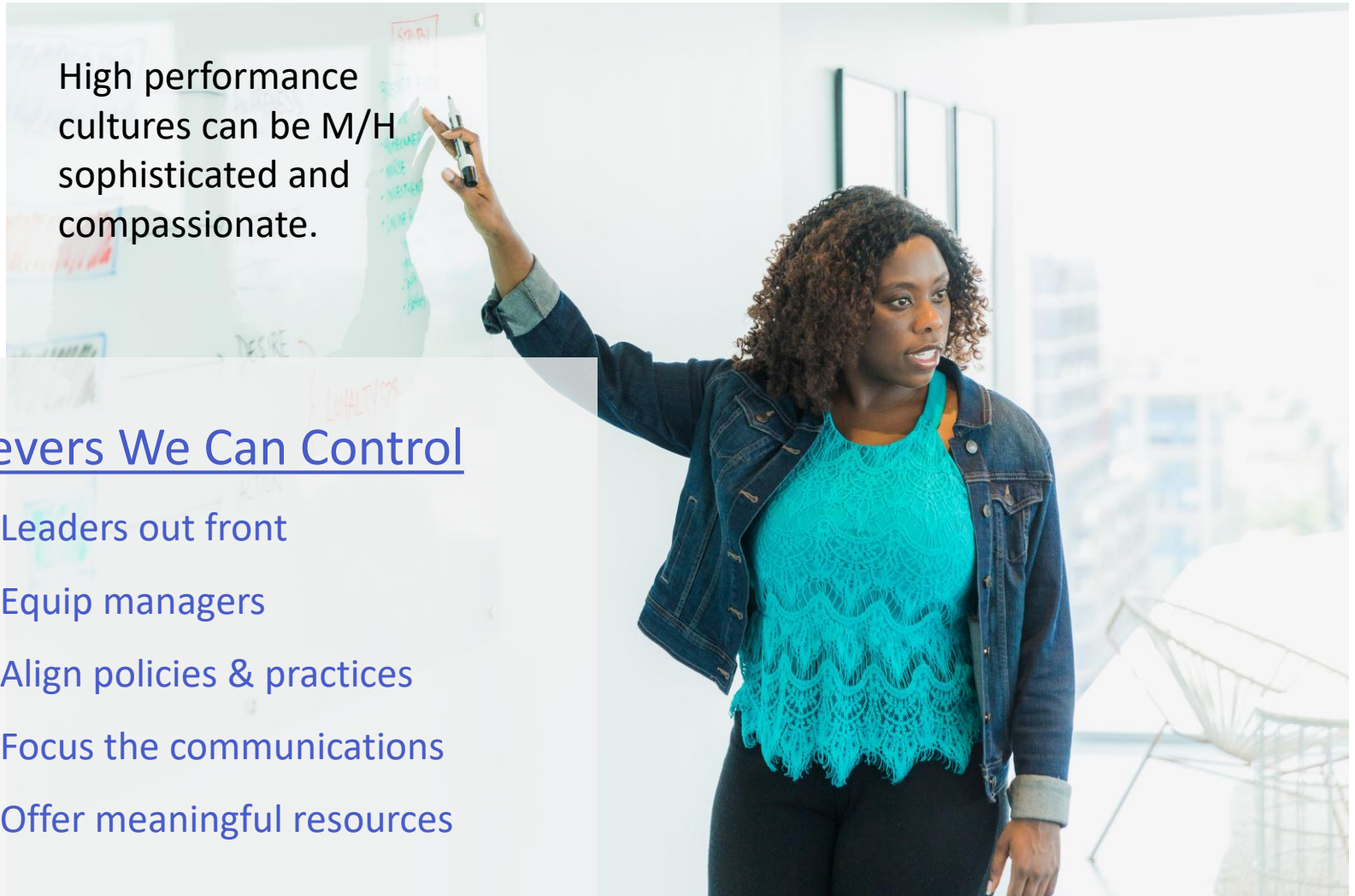
# Being Intentional About Culture



High performance cultures can be M/H sophisticated and compassionate.

## 5 Levers We Can Control

- ✓ 1. Leaders out front
- ✓ 2. Equip managers
- ✓ 3. Align policies & practices
- ✓ 4. Focus the communications
- 5. Offer meaningful resources



# Levers 1 & 2



## Leaders:

- Talk about the importance of wellness
- Develop personal narratives
- Speak to benefits
- Model supportive behavior

## Managers:

- Recognize symptoms
- Develop response skills
- Know benefits
- Know policy & practice



# The Skills Include

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- **Inquiry** – You seem... How are you?
- **Confirming** – I understand what you're telling me.
- **Validating** – That must be difficult.
- **Compassion** – What's important today is your wellbeing.
- **Expectations** – The job/team is important – today's plan.
- **Resources** – There are resources / benefits.
  - Can I help you connect.
  - I've used this resource before.
- **Follow up** – How are things going? How can I be most supportive?



# Aligning Policies & Practices



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## Do policies reflect:

- Espoused values about wellbeing?
- Needs associated with M/H issues?
  - Time & flexibility
  - Confidentiality
- ADA classifications of M/H conditions?
  - Reasonable accommodations



## Do practices include:

- Planned responses to M/H challenges?
- Documented & accessible process?
- Guidance to employees and managers?
- Nuance reflecting the differences within your population?
- Safeguards for confidentiality & acceptance?

Trust is gained/lost here

# Focusing Communication

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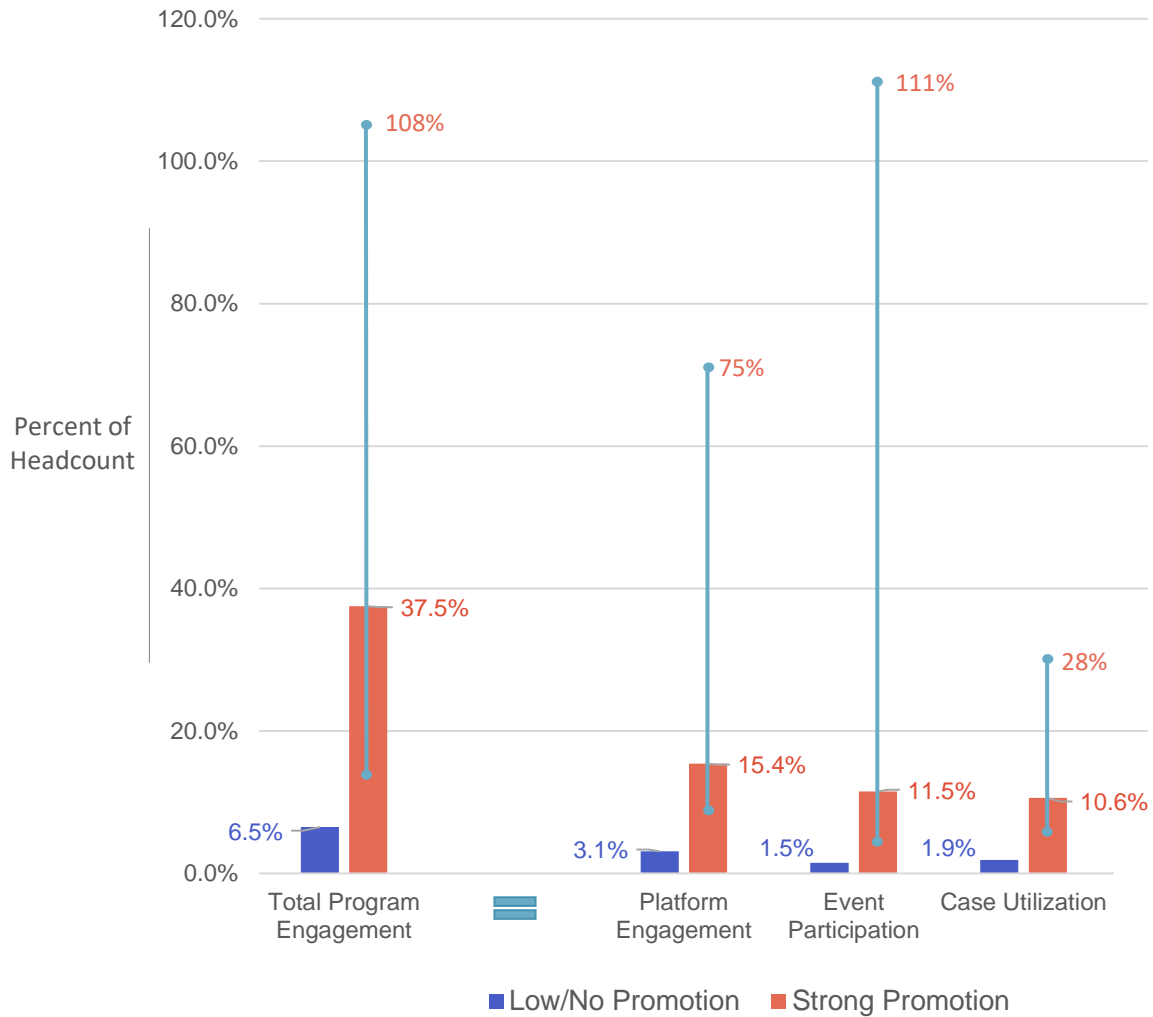
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## Moving Awareness & Attitudes

data based communications  
personalized learning (live)



# Impact of Live Promotion - 2024



Live promotion increases average program engagement by

**4 to 6x**

This is true across all measures, including **case utilization**

**KGA all-client data for 2024**  
Low/No and Strong Promotion groups each equal 70K employees or 25% of covered lives.

# Why?

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## Why people don't seek support:

- Don't recognize symptoms
- "Don't know how to describe it"
- Don't understand treatment
- **Shame /embarrassment**
- Fear of discrimination (40%)
- Lack of resources
- Access difficult (reality or perception)

Have managers & HR professionals that can spot it

Have vendor partners that will speak to issues and solutions

**Leaders & managers demonstrate**

**Align policies & practices**

**Robust mental health support / benefits**

# Positive Trends



US **cultural awareness** of mental health issues is rising.

- Our heroes are talking about it.

M/H is getting **normalized** as part of being human.



Younger **generations** have less stigma.

- Higher expectations and adoption.

It is becoming more acknowledged that **alignment of support** matters.

**Thank You**



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