

2016 Occupational Health Psychology (OHP) Summer Institute

OHP Innovation and Creative Strategies Leading to Total Worker Health July 12-14, 2016

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Address: 1825 SW Broadway, Portland, Oregon 97201

Jennifer Dimoff

Saint Mary's University, Halifax, NS, Canada

With a Little Help from My Boss: Supervisors as Resource Facilitators



Abstract: Employee mental health problems are among the costliest issues facing employers in the developed world. In the United States, mental health problems directly affect 1 in 5 people and are the leading cause of workplace disability. Recognizing this, many employers have introduced resources designed to help employees cope with stressors. Yet, these resources are remarkably underutilized. Organizational leaders (i.e., managers and supervisors) can play a unique role in increasing employee resource-use and improving employee mental-health. To do so, leaders need the appropriate knowledge, skills, and tools. So, we a) developed and evaluated a tool that leaders can use to identify when employees are struggling (i.e., the Signs of Struggle [SOS] Checklist), and b) developed a three-hour training for leaders designed to improve workplace mental health awareness (i.e., Mental Health

Awareness Training [MHAT] for leaders). The SOS has demonstrated its utility in real organizational settings and has helped leaders recognize the behavioral warning signs of a struggling employee—an employee who could benefit from resources. Through a longitudinal, control-group design, the MHAT has also demonstrated a significant impact on employee outcomes (e.g., resource utilization), leader outcomes (e.g., behavior change), and organizational return-on-investment (e.g., disability claim duration).