


Access to Better Living and Employment (ABLE)

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Description of Program

“Access to Better Living and Employment (ABLE) is an independent living and employment program that is geared towards assisting individuals with mental health or psychiatric disabilities gain skills and tools to assist them with living better and managing their conditions, to be better suited for employment pursuits in the future.”



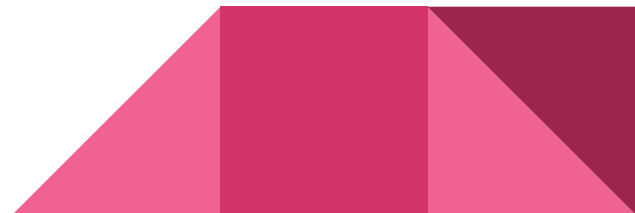
Topics Covered

- Disability Awareness
- Stress Management
- Coping Skills
- Life Management Skills
- Self-Care
- Stigma
- Advocacy
- Community Resources and Supports
- Work Readiness



Program Population

The program is best suited for adults (ages 18-65) who have a diagnosis of a mental health or psychiatric disability who are not ready for traditional employment services and need assistance identifying areas to improve upon as they try to work to live better and thus eventually work better.



Creation of ABLE

This program was created out of a specific need highlighted by Michigan Rehabilitation Services for their supported employment program. They noted that individuals in this population needed more support and skill building in all areas of life when attempting to return to work and retain their employment.



Program Focuses

Community-level barriers:

- Community and workplace stigma
- Low expectations of helping professionals



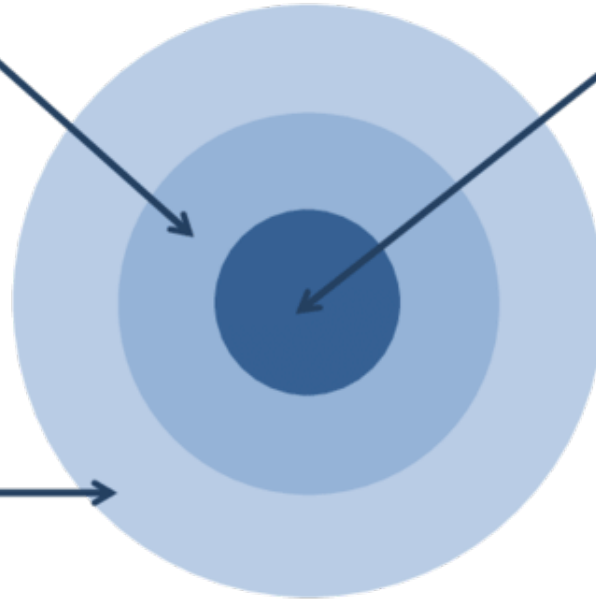
Individual-level barriers:

- Impact of the symptoms of illness
- Side effects of medication
- Episodic nature of illness
- Educational disadvantage



System-level barriers:

- Disincentives caused by the income support systems
- Lack of intersectoral collaboration between mental health and employment services



Focus on Levels of Barriers



People in the manufacturing, retail and food and beverage industries have the highest rates of workplace-related stress.

(Source: [Mental Health America](#))



More than 300 million people around the world suffer from depression. The condition is the leading reason why workers go on disability.

(Source: [World Health Organization](#))



Of the employers who become aware of a worker suffering from depression, 64 percent will refer that person to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

(Source: [Mental Health America](#))



Among people in the workplace, 83 percent of men and 72 percent of women report that workplace stress affects their personal lives.

(Source: [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#))



Mental health problems were attributed to workplace stress by 28 percent of Americans.

(Source: [Ipsos](#))

<https://www.namikenosha.org/workplace-mental-health.html>



Some of the common factors that can contribute to people's mental health problems include:

- Inflexible work schedules,
- Lack of support from management,
- Lack of clarity about work tasks or organizational objectives,
- Poor managerial communication, and
- Unsafe work environments.

(Source: [World Health Organization](#))



Workplace stress was reported by 57 percent of executives, 56 percent of middle managers, and 50 percent of frontline employees. The increased stress of people in management positions is attributed to the increased responsibility and time commitments these workers have.

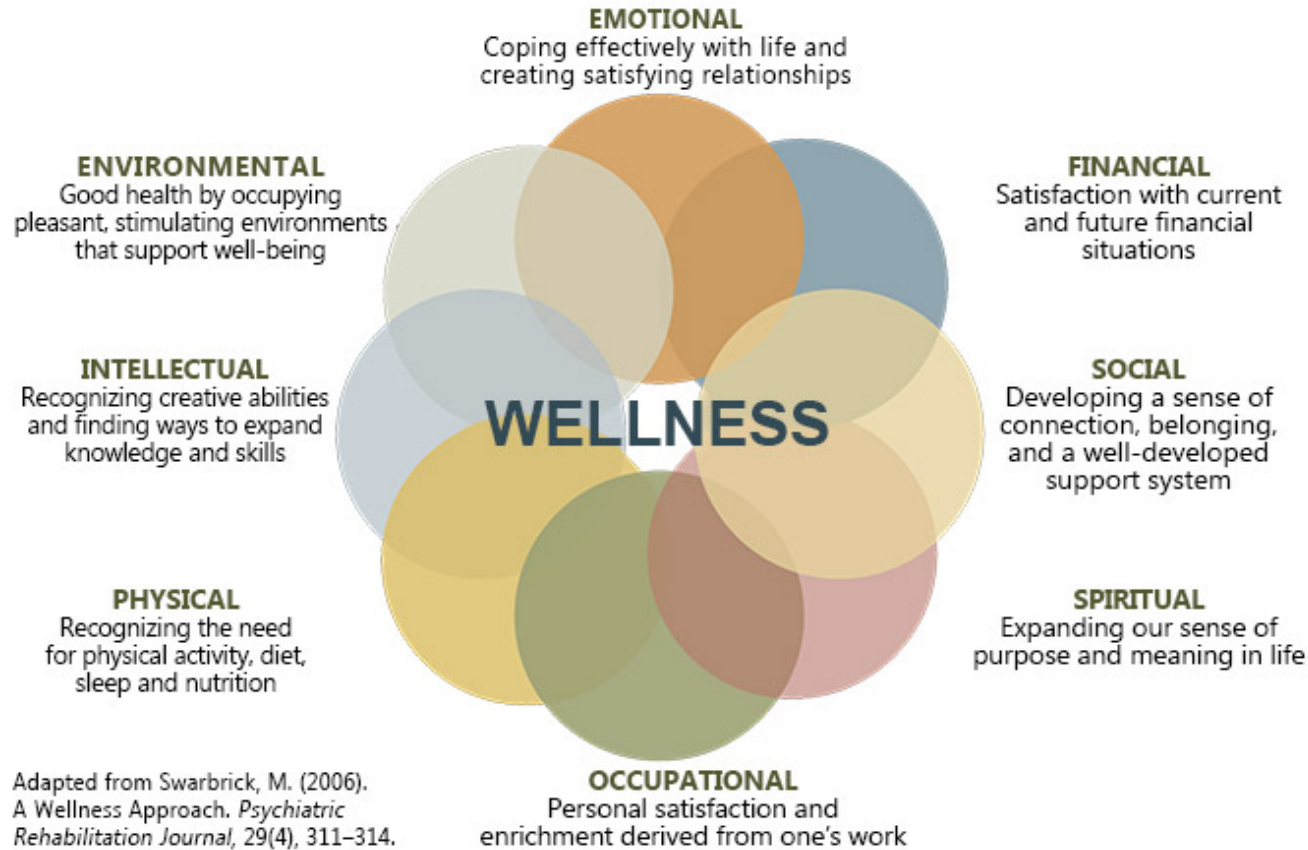
(Source: [Mental Health America](#))



Of workers, 56 percent report that stress and anxiety have affected their productivity, 51 percent say it's impacted their relationships with coworkers, and 50 percent say it has diminished the quality of their work.

(Source: [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#))

Focus on Retention



Holistic Approach to Wellness

Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006).
A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311–314.

Current Program Contents

Day One:

- Disability Awareness
 - Self-Care
 - Stress
- 

THE DIMENSIONS OF SELF-CARE



PHYSICAL

Physical self-care involves your fitness and sleep habits. This area also includes how you manage stress, your dental/medical check-ups, and sexual health.



INTELLECTUAL

Intellectual self-care involves your personal growth, continuous pursuit of learning and education, engaging in new things, practicing mindfulness, and having a positive mindset.



SOCIAL

Social self-care involves having a supportive network of people you can turn to when you need uplifting, guidance, or someone to talk to. Social connection helps create a sense of belonging and acceptance.



SPIRITUAL

Spiritual self-care involves the beliefs and values that guide your life. This includes practices that help nourish your soul, seek understanding, and explore your spiritual life.



EMOTIONAL

Emotional self-care involves awareness of your feelings and emotions, dealing with stress positively, and cultivating a sense of compassion, kindness, and a love for ourselves and others.

THEBLISSFULMIND.COM

The Gottman Institute

Building Your House Activity

“I loved this activity because it really helped me visualize all of the different pieces that go into taking care of myself and making sure I am working on bettering all parts of myself, rather than just the physical or mental.”



Stress Escalator Activity

Focused Coping Skills Exercise

“These activities just made me more aware. Aware of what stresses me and what I am doing to help cope whether healthy or unhealthy.”

Current Program Contents Cont.

Day Two:

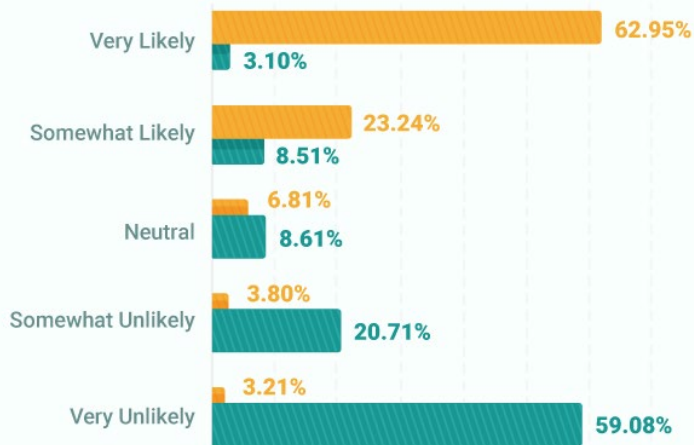
- Work/ Life Balance
- Stigma
- Advocacy and Accommodations



CALLING IN SICK

People's Willingness to Tell Their Boss How They Are Feeling

If you are, or were, suffering from **depression/physical illness**, how likely would you tell your boss it was the reason you wouldn't want to go into work?



Source: Survey of More Than 2,000 People

“I have quit my job before because my mental illness was just too much. I was having problems and rather than just talking to my boss about it, I quit. Left one day and just never came back.”

“When I was working, I frequently told my boss I was sick rather than having mental health issues. I hadn't disclosed, and had hid it pretty well so far, so I was not going to tell him the actual reason.”

WHAT AMERICANS ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT WHEN SEEKING HELP FOR THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

What makes you the most uncomfortable about talking about your mental health?



What is your biggest concern when seeking medical help for a mental illness?

"I don't want people to think that I'm crazy."

- 1 People
- 2 Mental
- 3 Stigma
- 4 Health
- 5 Feel
- 6 Judge
- 7 Weak
- 8 Understand
- 9 Illness
- 10 Judged
- 11 Personal
- 12 Uncomfortable
- 13 Depression
- 14 Talking
- 15 Crazy

"People might treat me differently"

- 1 Cost
- 2 Help
- 3 Medication
- 4 Medical
- 5 People
- 6 Doctor
- 7 Treatment
- 8 Concern
- 9 Illness
- 10 Money
- 11 Time
- 12 Stigma
- 13 Getting
- 14 Biggest
- 15 Drugs

Source: Survey of More Than 2,000 People

"I don't want anyone to know such personal things about me."

"It is so hard to talk about with anyone at work because one, you don't want anyone to know but also you feel like if you do, you will be immediately judged."

"I have told people before and it has ended badly. When people hear you have a mental illness, anything you do can be scrutinized. I felt like they were always waiting for me to do something."

Current Program Contents Cont.

Day Three:

- Professionalism
- Work Readiness
- Resources and Supports



Professional Portfolio

Interview Tips

Professional Dress

Appropriate Behavior

“I have not written a resume ever in my life, and I never thought I needed one before so this was really helpful in explaining not just what to say, but why it is important.”



Resources specific to the community, and the individuals in the program

Provide in electronic and hard copy format

Do not limit the diversity or resources

“I did not know that there were so many resources in the community I could access. This information is invaluable.”



Feedback from Participants

“This program is something that I found extremely helpful. I learned that I should not be ashamed to be a person with a mental illness, and that asking for help does not make me a weak person.”

“I truly feel more prepared to return to work now. I haven’t worked in 22 years and I was honestly terrified, but now I know what tools I have at my disposal and I feel very supported.”

“I feel like this is a program anyone could benefit from, not just people with mental illness. It really teaches you all of the pieces of the puzzle when looking at working again but also just living better overall.”



The Future of ABLE



ABLE will be changing for this new fiscal year:

- Cyclical programming running constantly
- Individuals can enter and complete parts of ABLE when they can
- Five content days

Future Directions for Program


Disability Awareness

- Share About Your Disability Activity

Self-Care

- Self-Care Day with Self-Care Kits

Stress Management and Coping Skills

- Guided Meditation
 - Guided Visualization
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Grounding
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Future Directions for Program Cont.

Work/Life Balance

- Journaling Activity

Stigma

- Awareness for the Community

Advocacy and Accommodations

- AT Demonstration
 - Practice Communicating with Employers
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Future Directions for Program Cont.

Professionalism

- Professional Attire Workshops
- Creating Professional Documents

Work Readiness

- Workplace Tours
- Peer Networking Event

Resources and Support

- Resource Fair
 - Presentations from Community Partners
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Questions?