



Co-funded by
the European Union



Sharing4Employment

Finding Purpose: A Comprehensive Guide to Meaningful Employment for Adults with Mental Health Challenges



2023-1-BE01-KA210-ADU-000165032

Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Project & Partnership
- A comprehensive guide to meaningful employment for adults with mental health challenges
- ✓ Good practices from Italy
- ✓ Good practices from Belgium
- ✓ Good practices from Greece
- ✓ Useful resources



INTRODUCTION

Sharing plays a crucial role in the context of employment.

In the workplace, sharing ideas, knowledge, and expertise fosters a collaborative environment where individuals can leverage their strengths to achieve common goals.

Employees who openly share their insights contribute to a culture of learning and growth, enhancing overall team productivity and problem-solving capabilities.

Additionally, sharing feedback and constructive criticism constructively can lead to personal and professional development.

Moreover, sharing successes and accomplishments not only fosters a sense of camaraderie but also encourages recognition and motivation within the team.

Embracing a culture of sharing in employment ultimately cultivates a supportive and innovative workforce, leading to the collective success of both individuals and the organization as a whole.





PROJECT AND PARTNERSHIP

This project aspires to **share policies** and approaches aimed at tackling employment obstacles faced by adults with mental health issues.

Motivated by a common goal, four partners from three EU countries want to **facilitate employment opportunities** in the digital era for adults with mental health problems. Their aim is to share **inspiring practices** from Belgium, Greece, and Italy with adults diagnosed with bipolar disorder or ADHD and their family caregivers.



Solidarity Initiatives For Development

Solide is an organization from Belgium that provides support and fights against gender inequalities.



Pmi Services

This enterprise from Italy aims to deliver top-tier education and tailored services to private and public sectors, young individuals, and professionals seeking to upskill or diversify their skillsets.



EPIONI
GREEK CARERS NETWORK

Greek Carers Network EPIONI

This NGO from Greece supports individuals who work as informal, unpaid carers of family members or friends struggling with physical or mental illness, disability or addiction.



Belgian Brain Council

This organization from Belgium has a unique platform that coordinates activities to bridge the gap between patients, researchers and policy makers. Also supports for brain science and mental health.



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT FOR ADULTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Finding meaningful employment can be particularly challenging for adults with mental health issues.

This guide aims to address common questions and provide strategies to overcome these challenges, helping individuals achieve satisfying and productive work lives.

Below are detailed and comprehensive answers to ten critical questions related to employment for individuals with mental health conditions.

Q1. What challenges do adults with mental health issues face when seeking meaningful employment?

"The human spirit is stronger than anything that can happen to it."

C.C. Scott

Adults with mental health issues encounter several significant barriers when seeking employment.

One of the primary challenges is stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Employers often hold misconceptions about the reliability and productivity of individuals with mental health conditions, leading to fewer job opportunities. These biases can manifest in various ways, from overt discrimination to more subtle forms of bias, such as hesitation to hire or promote individuals with known mental health histories.

Internally, individuals may struggle with anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions that can affect their job search efforts.

For instance, anxiety can make the process of applying for jobs and attending interviews particularly daunting. Depression can sap motivation and energy, making it difficult to maintain a consistent job search. These internal challenges can

Q1.

lead to feelings of hopelessness and a lack of confidence, further hindering the job search process.

Moreover, explaining gaps in employment history due to mental health crises can be a challenging and delicate task. Potential employers may view these gaps with suspicion or concern, fearing that the candidate may not be a stable or reliable employee. This prejudice can be difficult to overcome, even when individuals are transparent and honest about their experiences and the steps they have taken to manage their mental health.

To address these challenges, it is essential for individuals to develop strategies that highlight their strengths and capabilities while also addressing potential concerns about their mental health. For example, focusing on how managing a mental health condition has developed resilience, problem-solving skills,

and adaptability can turn a potential negative into a positive attribute.

Additionally, seeking supportive work environments and employers who prioritize mental health and well-being can make a significant difference.

In navigating these challenges, self-awareness and

Q1.

self-advocacy are crucial. Individuals should be prepared to discuss their mental health in a way that is honest but also frames their experiences in a positive light. It can also be helpful to seek out organizations and programs that specialize in supporting individuals with mental health conditions in their job search. These organizations can provide resources, counseling, and advocacy that can make the process more manageable and successful.

Additionally, society as a whole needs to shift its perspective on mental health in the workplace. Education and awareness programs can help reduce stigma and promote a more inclusive work environment. Employers can play a key role by fostering a culture of openness and support, where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health without fear of discrimination.

Creating such a culture involves training managers and HR professionals to recognize and address mental health issues appropriately. It also includes implementing policies that support mental health, such as flexible work arrangements, mental health days, and access to mental health resources. By taking these steps, employers can not only support their employees with mental health conditions but also create a more productive and positive work environment for all.

Q1.

In conclusion, adults with mental health issues face significant challenges when seeking meaningful employment, but with the right strategies, support, and societal changes, these challenges can be overcome. By fostering a more inclusive and understanding workplace culture, we can help individuals with mental health conditions achieve their career goals and contribute meaningfully to the workforce.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), American Psychological Association (APA).

Q2. What is mental health and how does it affect work performance?

"Mental health is not a destination, but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going."

Noam Shpancer, PhD

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how individuals handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Good mental health enables individuals to function effectively in daily life and work. However, mental health issues can significantly impair work performance, leading to reduced concentration, impaired decision-making, and decreased productivity. These effects can manifest in various ways, such as difficulty completing tasks, maintaining focus, or interacting with colleagues.

Mental health issues can also increase absenteeism and presenteeism. Absenteeism refers to frequent or prolonged absence from work due to mental health conditions, while presenteeism involves being present at work but not fully functioning due to these issues. Both scenarios can negatively impact the individual's performance and the overall productivity of the team or organization.

Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that with appropriate support and accommodations,

Q2.

Individuals with mental health conditions can perform at high levels. Accommodations might include flexible working hours, opportunities for remote work, or modifications to the work environment that reduce stressors. Employers who are willing to provide these accommodations often find that their employees with mental health conditions can be just as productive and valuable as their other employees.

Additionally, promoting a supportive work environment where mental health is openly discussed and prioritized can help reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions. This can encourage employees to seek help and support when needed, rather than hiding their struggles, which can lead to more severe issues down the line.

Mental health issues also highlight the importance of work-life balance. Ensuring that employees have adequate time to rest, pursue hobbies, and spend time with loved ones can contribute to better mental health and overall job performance. Employers can support this by promoting policies that encourage a healthy work-life balance, such as offering flexible scheduling, ensuring reasonable workloads, and providing mental health days.

Furthermore, understanding mental health involves

Q2.

recognizing its multifaceted nature. It is not just about the absence of mental disorders but also about the presence of positive attributes such as resilience, coping skills, and emotional intelligence. Mental health is dynamic and can fluctuate based on various factors, including personal experiences, work environment, and social support systems.

For individuals, managing mental health involves proactive measures such as regular exercise, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, and engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation. Mindfulness practices and stress management techniques can also play a crucial role in maintaining mental well-being. Seeking professional help when needed and adhering to treatment plans is equally important.

In the workplace, mental health initiatives can include offering training programs for employees and managers to understand mental health better, creating peer support groups, and providing access to mental health resources such as counseling services and wellness programs. By creating an environment that values and supports mental health, organizations can foster a culture of well-being and productivity.

In conclusion, mental health significantly affects work performance, but with the right support and strategies, individuals can manage their mental

Q2.

health and perform effectively in their jobs.

By fostering a supportive and understanding work environment, employers can help their employees with mental health conditions thrive and contribute meaningfully to their organizations.

Sources: World Health Organization (WHO), Mental Health Foundation.

Q3. What are the benefits of meaningful employment for adults with mental health challenges?

"To find joy in work is to discover the fountain of youth."

Pearl S. Buck

Meaningful employment provides several benefits for adults with mental health challenges. It offers structure, purpose, and social interaction, which are crucial for mental well-being. A steady job can provide a sense of routine and normalcy, which can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Engaging in meaningful work can foster a sense of accomplishment and financial independence, enhancing overall life satisfaction.

The benefits of employment extend beyond financial stability. Employment can help individuals build and maintain social connections, which are important for mental health. Workplaces can provide opportunities for social interaction, collaboration, and support, which can alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness that often accompany mental health conditions.

Moreover, meaningful employment can significantly boost self-esteem and confidence. Successfully

Q3.

performing job tasks and contributing to the workplace can reinforce a sense of self-worth and capability. This positive feedback loop can help individuals with mental health challenges feel more confident in other areas of their lives as well.

Employment can also serve as a distraction from negative thoughts and behaviors associated with mental health conditions. Being occupied with job responsibilities and goals can provide a positive focus and reduce the time available for rumination and negative thinking. This active engagement can be therapeutic and contribute to better mental health.

Additionally, the financial benefits of employment cannot be understated. Having a steady income can reduce financial stress and provide resources for managing mental health, such as access to therapy, medication, and other support services. Financial independence can also empower individuals to make choices that are in their best interest, further supporting their mental well-being.

Furthermore, meaningful employment contributes to personal growth and development. It provides opportunities to learn new skills, take on challenges, and achieve professional milestones. This continuous development can lead to a greater sense of purpose

Q3.

and fulfillment in life. For individuals with mental health challenges, this growth reinforces their ability to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

Employers also benefit from fostering an inclusive workplace that supports employees with mental health challenges. A diverse and supportive work environment can enhance creativity, innovation, and overall team performance. Employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to be engaged, productive, and loyal to their organization.

Creating a supportive work environment involves implementing policies and practices that promote mental health and well-being. This can include providing access to mental health resources, offering flexible work arrangements, and fostering a culture of open communication and support. Employers can also provide training and education on mental health to help reduce stigma and create a more inclusive workplace.

In conclusion, meaningful employment offers numerous benefits for adults with mental health challenges. By recognizing and promoting these benefits, we can support individuals with mental health challenges in their pursuit of meaningful and rewarding work.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, Mental Health America (MHA).

Q4. How can individuals identify their strengths and skills to match with potential job opportunities?

"Each of us has our own unique flame, and when we allow it to shine, we light up the world."

Unknown

Identifying strengths and skills is a critical step in the job search process, especially for individuals with mental health challenges. Self-assessment tools and career counseling can be highly beneficial in this regard. Tools like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), StrengthsFinder, and various career assessment tests can help individuals understand their preferences and skills, aligning them with suitable job opportunities.

Reflective practices, such as journaling or mindfulness exercises, can also help individuals gain insight into their strengths and abilities. By reflecting on past experiences and achievements, individuals can identify patterns and skills that have contributed to their successes. This self-awareness can be invaluable in the job search process.

Feedback from mentors, colleagues, and friends can provide additional perspectives on an individual's strengths and skills. Engaging in conversations with trusted individuals can reveal strengths that the

Q4.

individual may not have recognized in themselves. This external feedback can be used to validate self-assessments and provide a more comprehensive understanding of one's abilities.

Career counseling and coaching can offer professional guidance in identifying strengths and matching them with potential job opportunities. Career counselors can administer assessment tests, provide feedback, and suggest career paths that align with the individual's strengths and interests. They can also help individuals develop strategies for marketing their strengths to potential employers.

Engaging in volunteer work, internships, or part-time jobs can provide practical experience and further clarify strengths and skills. These opportunities allow individuals to explore different fields, gain hands-on experience, and build a professional network. They also provide tangible examples of skills and achievements that can be highlighted in resumes and cover letters.

Additionally, using the Positive Psychotherapy approach, individuals can balance their focus on various life areas: Body/Health, Work/Success, Relationships/Social, and Future/Spirituality. By assessing how much energy they devote to each area and envisioning their ideal balance, individuals

Q4.

can gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and areas for growth. This holistic approach can help individuals align their job search with their overall life goals and values.

Positive Psychotherapy is grounded in several key principles that guide its approach to enhancing well-being and personal growth. One principle is the strength-based focus, which emphasizes identifying and nurturing an individual's strengths and virtues. Rather than dwelling on weaknesses or problems, therapists help clients recognize and build upon their positive qualities. This approach can be particularly beneficial in the job search process, as it encourages individuals to focus on their strengths and how they can apply them in the workplace.

Another principle is the goal-oriented approach, which helps clients set achievable and meaningful goals. These goals provide direction and motivation, driving personal growth and satisfaction. In the context of job searching, setting clear career goals can help individuals stay focused and motivated, making the process more manageable and less overwhelming.

In summary, identifying strengths and skills involves a combination of self-assessment, feedback from others, career counseling, and practical experience.

Q4.

By leveraging these resources and approaches, individuals can gain a clear understanding of their abilities and match them with suitable job opportunities, ultimately enhancing their chances of finding meaningful and fulfilling employment.

Sources: CareerOneStop, Indeed Career Guide.

Q5. How can job search strategies (including job boards, recruiters, and networking opportunities) be utilized effectively?

"The only way to achieve the impossible is to believe it is possible."

Charles Kingsleigh, *Alice in Wonderland*

Effective job search strategies are essential for finding meaningful employment, particularly for individuals with mental health challenges. Utilizing job boards, engaging with recruiters, and leveraging networking opportunities can significantly enhance job search efforts.

Job boards like Indeed, LinkedIn, and Glassdoor provide a wide range of job listings across various industries and locations. These platforms allow users to search for jobs based on specific criteria, such as job title, location, and company. Setting up job alerts can help individuals stay informed about new job postings that match their preferences. Additionally, these platforms often provide resources for resume building, cover letter writing, and interview preparation.

Engaging with recruiters can offer personalized job matches and valuable insights into the job market.

Q5.

Recruiters often have access to job openings that may not be advertised publicly and can provide guidance on how to present oneself effectively to potential employers. Building relationships with recruiters can also lead to long-term career support and opportunities for professional growth.

Networking is another crucial aspect of the job search process. Networking can be done through professional associations, social media, industry events, and informational interviews. Platforms like LinkedIn allow individuals to connect with professionals in their field, join industry groups, and participate in discussions. Attending industry events and conferences provides opportunities to meet potential employers, learn about job openings, and gain insights into industry trends.

Tailoring resumes and cover letters to specific job descriptions is essential for standing out in the job search process. Highlighting relevant experience, transferable skills, and accomplishments that align with the job requirements can increase the chances of securing an interview. It is also important to use a clear and professional format for resumes and cover letters.

Following up on applications and maintaining a professional online presence are key components of

Q5.

an effective job search strategy.

After submitting an application, sending a follow-up email can demonstrate interest and initiative. Keeping professional profiles, such as LinkedIn, up to date with relevant experience and skills can also attract potential employers.

In addition to these strategies, it is important to maintain a positive and proactive mindset during the job search process. This involves staying organized, setting daily or weekly job search goals, and keeping track of applications and follow-ups. It can also be helpful to join job search support groups or forums where individuals can share experiences, advice, and encouragement.

Another effective strategy is to leverage informational interviews. Informational interviews involve reaching out to professionals in your desired field to learn more about their career paths, industry trends, and potential job opportunities. These conversations can provide valuable insights and help expand your professional network. They also demonstrate your initiative and genuine interest in the field, which can leave a positive impression on industry professionals.

Furthermore, considering temporary or contract work can be a viable option for gaining experience and building a professional network. These opportunities can sometimes lead to permanent

Q5.

positions and provide valuable experience that can enhance your resume. Temporary work can also be a good way to explore different industries and job roles, helping you clarify your career goals and interests.

In conclusion, utilizing job boards, engaging with recruiters, and leveraging networking opportunities are effective strategies for finding meaningful employment. By tailoring resumes and cover letters, following up on applications, maintaining a professional online presence, and adopting a proactive mindset, individuals can enhance their job search efforts and increase their chances of securing fulfilling employment.

Sources: LinkedIn, Glassdoor, The Balance Careers.

Q6. What are some tips and examples for resume and cover letter development tailored to the unique needs of adults with mental health challenges?

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

Winston Churchill

Developing resumes and cover letters tailored to the unique needs of adults with mental health challenges involves focusing on relevant experience, addressing employment gaps honestly, and highlighting transferable skills. Here are some detailed tips and examples:

Focus on Relevant Experience and Transferable Skills: When crafting a resume and cover letter, emphasize relevant experience and transferable skills. This includes volunteer work, continuous education, and any activities that demonstrate skills applicable to the desired job. For example, if applying for a customer service position, highlight experience in roles that involved communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, even if they were in different industries.

Address Employment Gaps Honestly: It is important

Q6.

to address employment gaps honestly while emphasizing how the time was used productively. For instance, if there was a period of unemployment due to mental health reasons, explain how you used the time to improve skills, engage in volunteer work, or take courses. This demonstrates resilience and a commitment to personal and professional growth.

Example: “During my time away from the workforce, I focused on personal development and took courses in project management, which has enhanced my ability to manage multiple tasks effectively. Additionally, I volunteered at a local non-profit organization, where I honed my communication and organizational skills.”

Highlight Problem-Solving Skills, Resilience, and Adaptability: Employers value candidates who can demonstrate problem-solving skills, resilience, and adaptability. These qualities are particularly important for individuals with mental health challenges, as they often have developed these skills through managing their condition.

Example: “In previous roles, I have demonstrated strong problem-solving skills by effectively managing projects with tight deadlines and limited resources. My experience has taught me to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and maintain a

Q6.

positive attitude in the face of challenges.”

Customize Each Resume and Cover Letter: Tailoring each resume and cover letter to the job description is crucial. Use keywords from the job posting and highlight specific experiences that match the requirements. This increases the chances of passing through applicant tracking systems (ATS) and catching the attention of hiring managers.

Example Cover Letter Opening: “I am excited to apply for the Marketing Coordinator position at XYZ Company. With over five years of experience in marketing and a proven track record of successful campaign management, I am confident in my ability to contribute to your team’s success. My background in digital marketing, combined with my strong analytical skills, makes me a perfect fit for this role.”

Use a Clear and Professional Format: A clear and professional format is essential for making a positive impression. Use a clean layout, consistent font, and clear headings to organize information. Avoid clutter and ensure that the most important information is easy to find.

Additional Tips:

- Include a summary or objective statement at the beginning of the resume that highlights your key

Q6.

strengths and career goals.

- Use bullet points to list job duties and accomplishments, making it easier for hiring managers to scan your resume.
- Provide specific examples of achievements, such as “Increased sales by 20% through targeted marketing campaigns.”
- Keep the resume concise, ideally one to two pages, and ensure there are no grammatical or typographical errors.

In addition to these practical tips, consider incorporating elements from Positive Psychotherapy into your resume and cover letter development. For instance, the principle of positive reframing can be applied by highlighting how managing a mental health condition has developed valuable skills such as resilience, empathy, and problem-solving. This approach can help shift the focus from challenges to strengths and capabilities.

Furthermore, practicing gratitude and positive self-talk can boost confidence and motivation during the job search process. Keeping a gratitude journal where you regularly note your accomplishments and positive experiences can help maintain a positive outlook. Positive self-talk involves replacing negative thoughts with affirming and encouraging ones, reinforcing your belief in your abilities.

Q6.

By following these tips and tailoring resumes and cover letters to their unique needs, adults with mental health challenges can present themselves effectively to potential employers and increase their chances of securing meaningful employment.

Sources: Monster Career Advice, Indeed Career Guide.

Q7. How can one prepare for and practice job interviews, including addressing potential stigma and discrimination?

"Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start."

Nido Qubein

Preparing for job interviews is crucial, especially for individuals with mental health challenges who may face stigma and discrimination. Here are detailed strategies to help prepare for and practice job interviews effectively:

Research the Company: Understanding the company's values, culture, and recent developments can help tailor responses and demonstrate genuine interest. Review the company's website, social media profiles, and recent news articles to gather relevant information.

Practice Common Interview Questions: Practicing common interview questions can build confidence and reduce anxiety. Focus on questions related to your skills, experience, and how you handle challenges. Behavioral questions, which ask about past experiences and actions, are common in interviews.

Q7.

Example Questions:

- “Can you describe a time when you had to manage multiple tasks under a tight deadline?”
- “How do you handle stress and pressure in the workplace?”

Role-Playing: Role-playing with a friend, family member, or career counselor can provide valuable practice. This exercise allows you to receive feedback on your responses, body language, and overall presentation.

Discussing Mental Health (If Comfortable): If you feel comfortable, briefly discussing your mental health condition and how you manage it can be beneficial. Focus on your strengths and the strategies you use to maintain productivity and well-being.

Example: “I have a mental health condition that I manage effectively with the help of therapy and a strong support system. This experience has taught me valuable skills such as resilience, problem-solving, and time management, which I apply in my professional life.”

Know Your Rights: Understanding your rights regarding discrimination is essential. Familiarize yourself with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines and the Americans

Q7.

with Disabilities Act (ADA). These resources provide information on what constitutes discrimination and how to address it if it occurs.

Preparing Responses to Inappropriate Questions:

While it is illegal for employers to ask certain questions about your mental health, it is still important to be prepared for such scenarios. Practice responses that redirect the conversation to your skills and qualifications.

Example: “If asked, ‘Do you have any health issues that might affect your work?’ you might respond, ‘I am confident in my ability to perform the duties of this position effectively and have strategies in place to manage any challenges that may arise.’”

Building Confidence: Confidence can be built through preparation and positive self-talk. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments before the interview. Visualizing a successful interview can also help reduce anxiety.

Stress Management Techniques: Using stress management techniques before and during the interview can help maintain calmness and focus. Techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and visualization can be effective.

Follow-Up: After the interview, sending a follow-up

Q7.

email thanking the interviewer for their time and reiterating your interest in the position can leave a positive impression. This is also an opportunity to address any points you may have missed during the interview.

Example Follow-Up Email: “Dear [Interviewer’s Name], Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am very excited about the opportunity to join [Company Name] and contribute to your team. I appreciate the insightful conversation we had about [specific topic discussed]. Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide. Thank you again for your consideration. Best regards, [Your Name]”

In addition to these strategies, practicing mindfulness and positive visualization can help manage interview anxiety. Mindfulness techniques, such as focusing on your breath and staying present in the moment, can help calm nerves and improve focus. Visualizing a successful interview, where you confidently answer questions and connect positively with the interviewer, can also boost confidence and reduce anxiety.

Furthermore, seeking support from a career counselor or therapist can provide additional guidance and encouragement. They can offer personalized advice, help you practice interview skills, and provide emotional support throughout the

Q7.

job search process. Joining support groups or online forums where individuals share their experiences and tips for job searching with mental health challenges can also be beneficial.

By thoroughly preparing for job interviews and addressing potential stigma and discrimination proactively, individuals with mental health challenges can increase their chances of securing meaningful employment. With the right strategies and support, you can present yourself confidently and effectively to potential employers.

Sources: Harvard Business Review, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Q8. How can workplace accommodations be understood and requested?

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes."

William James

Understanding and requesting workplace accommodations is crucial for individuals with mental health challenges to thrive in their jobs. Here's a comprehensive guide on how to navigate this process:

Understanding Legal Rights: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and similar laws in other countries provide protections for employees with disabilities, including mental health conditions. These laws require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals, as long as it does not cause undue hardship to the employer. Familiarizing yourself with these legal rights is essential.

Identifying Needed Accommodations: Before requesting accommodations, it is important to identify what specific accommodations you need. Reflect on your job responsibilities and consider what adjustments or supports would help you perform your duties effectively. Common

Q8.

accommodations for mental health conditions include flexible working hours, opportunities for remote work, modified job duties, and access to a quiet workspace.

Documenting Your Needs: Having documentation from a healthcare provider can support your request for accommodations. This documentation should outline your mental health condition, how it affects your work, and the recommended accommodations. While you are not required to disclose your diagnosis, providing this information can help your employer understand your needs better.

Requesting Accommodations: When requesting accommodations, it is best to approach the conversation with HR or your supervisor with a clear and positive attitude. Be specific about what accommodations you need and how they will help you perform your job more effectively. It is helpful to provide examples of how these accommodations have worked for you in the past or how you believe they will enhance your work performance.

Example Request: “I have a mental health condition that sometimes affects my concentration and productivity. To perform my job duties effectively, I would benefit from a flexible schedule that allows me to work during my most productive hours and

Q8.

occasional remote work days. These accommodations will help me manage my condition and maintain a high level of performance.”

Engaging in an Open Dialogue: Engaging in an open dialogue with your employer about your needs and potential accommodations is crucial. Be prepared to discuss how the accommodations will work in practice and address any concerns your employer may have. This collaborative approach can lead to mutually beneficial solutions.

Providing Specific Examples: Providing specific examples of how the accommodations will improve your work performance can be persuasive. For instance, explain how flexible hours will help you manage symptoms that affect your productivity or how a quiet workspace will reduce distractions and improve concentration.

Follow-Up and Adjustments: After the accommodations are implemented, follow up with your employer to assess their effectiveness. If the accommodations are not working as expected, be proactive in discussing adjustments. Continuous communication can ensure that your needs are met and that you can perform your job to the best of your abilities.

Q8.

Additional Resources: Organizations like the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and ADA National Network provide valuable resources and guidance on workplace accommodations. These organizations can offer advice on specific accommodations, legal rights, and how to navigate the accommodation process.

In addition to these steps, consider using the Positive Psychotherapy principle of enhancing relationships to foster a supportive work environment. Building positive relationships with supervisors and colleagues can create a more understanding and accommodating workplace. Effective communication and mutual respect are key components of these relationships.

Practicing resilience and adaptability can also help manage the process of requesting accommodations. Being open to adjustments and willing to work collaboratively with your employer can lead to more successful outcomes. Resilience involves staying positive and proactive, even in the face of challenges or setbacks.

In summary, understanding your legal rights, identifying needed accommodations, and engaging in open and specific communication with your employer are key steps in requesting workplace

Q8.

accommodations. By taking these steps, individuals with mental health challenges can create a supportive work environment that enables them to succeed.

Sources: Job Accommodation Network (JAN), ADA National Network.

Q9. What stress management techniques and communication skills are essential for maintaining employment?

"You don't have to control your thoughts. You just have to stop letting them control you."

Dan Millman

Effective stress management and communication skills are vital for maintaining employment, especially for individuals with mental health challenges. Here are detailed strategies and techniques:

Stress Management Techniques:

- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Mindfulness and meditation practices can help individuals stay present and reduce stress. Techniques such as deep breathing, guided meditation, and mindfulness exercises can be practiced regularly to manage stress levels.
- **Regular Exercise:** Physical activity is a proven method to reduce stress and improve mental health. Incorporating regular exercise into your routine, such as walking, jogging, or yoga, can have significant benefits.
- **Adequate Rest:** Ensuring adequate rest and sleep

Q9.

is crucial for mental health. Establishing a regular sleep schedule and creating a restful environment can help improve the quality of sleep.

- **Setting Realistic Goals:** Setting realistic and achievable goals can help manage workload and reduce stress. Breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps can make them less overwhelming.
- **Healthy Work-Life Balance:** Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential. Prioritizing time for hobbies, relaxation, and spending time with loved ones can help prevent burnout and maintain overall well-being.

Communication Skills:

- **Assertiveness:** Being assertive involves expressing your needs, thoughts, and feelings clearly and respectfully. This skill can help in setting boundaries, asking for help, and communicating effectively with colleagues and supervisors.
- **Active Listening:** Active listening involves fully concentrating on the speaker, understanding their message, and responding thoughtfully. This skill fosters better relationships and clearer communication in the workplace.

Q9.

- **Clarity and Conciseness:** Communicating clearly and concisely can help avoid misunderstandings and ensure that your message is understood. Using straightforward language and getting to the point can improve communication efficiency.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence involves recognizing and managing your emotions and understanding the emotions of others. This skill can enhance interpersonal relationships and improve teamwork and collaboration.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Effective conflict resolution skills are essential for addressing disagreements and finding mutually acceptable solutions. Techniques such as active listening, empathy, and problem-solving can help resolve conflicts constructively.

Building a Supportive Network: Creating a supportive network at work can provide emotional support and reduce stress. Building positive relationships with colleagues, seeking mentorship, and participating in workplace social activities can contribute to a supportive work environment.

Workplace Resources: Utilizing workplace resources such as employee assistance programs (EAPs),

Q9.

counseling services, and stress management workshops can provide additional support. These resources often offer confidential support and practical strategies for managing stress and improving mental health.

Maintaining a Healthy Work Environment:

Contributing to a healthy work environment involves fostering a culture of open communication, mutual respect, and support. Encouraging mental health awareness and promoting well-being initiatives can benefit all employees.

Conclusion: Effective stress management and communication skills are essential for maintaining employment and overall well-being. By practicing mindfulness, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and developing strong communication skills, individuals with mental health challenges can thrive in their workplaces.

Sources: Mind (UK), Verywell Mind.

Q10. What resources are available for ongoing support and advocacy, including mental health providers, employment agencies, and support groups?

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Helen Keller

Accessing ongoing support and advocacy is crucial for individuals with mental health challenges to maintain employment and well-being. Here are detailed descriptions of various resources:

Mental Health Providers:

- **Therapists and Counselors:** Mental health providers such as therapists and counselors offer ongoing support through individual or group therapy. They can help manage symptoms, develop coping strategies, and provide emotional support. Therapists specializing in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and other evidence-based treatments can be particularly beneficial.
- **Psychiatrists:** Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can diagnose and treat mental health

Q10.

conditions. They can prescribe medications, provide psychotherapy, and offer comprehensive mental health care. Regular follow-ups with a psychiatrist can help manage medication and monitor progress.

Employment Agencies:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services:** Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) are government-funded programs that help individuals with disabilities, including mental health conditions, find and maintain employment. These services offer job placement, training, and support to ensure successful employment outcomes.
- **Specialized Employment Agencies:** Some employment agencies specialize in assisting individuals with disabilities. These agencies provide personalized job search assistance, resume building, interview preparation, and job matching services. They also work with employers to create inclusive and supportive work environments.

Support Groups:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** NAMI offers various support groups for individuals with mental health conditions and

Q10.

their families. These groups provide a safe space to share experiences, receive support, and gain valuable insights from peers. NAMI also offers educational programs and advocacy resources.

- **Local Community Organizations:** Many local community organizations offer support groups for individuals with mental health challenges. These groups can provide peer support, social connections, and access to local resources. Community mental health centers often host these groups and offer additional services.
- **Online Support Groups:** Online support groups and forums provide a convenient way to connect with others who have similar experiences. Platforms like Reddit, Mental Health America, and various mental health organizations offer online communities where individuals can seek support and share resources.

Additional Resources:

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Many employers offer EAPs, which provide confidential counseling, support, and resources for employees facing personal or work-related challenges. EAPs can help with stress management, mental health concerns, and other issues affecting job performance.

Q10.

- **Advocacy Organizations:** Advocacy organizations such as Mental Health America (MHA) and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) offer resources, advocacy, and support for individuals with mental health conditions. These organizations work to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote mental health policies.
- **Educational Resources:** Various organizations provide educational resources on mental health, employment rights, and coping strategies. Websites like the American Psychological Association (APA), World Health Organization (WHO), and mental health foundations offer articles, guides, and toolkits to support individuals with mental health challenges.

Conclusion: Ongoing support and advocacy are essential for individuals with mental health challenges to maintain employment and well-being. By accessing mental health providers, employment agencies, support groups, and additional resources, individuals can receive the support they need to thrive in their personal and professional lives.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), U.S. Department of Labor.



**GOOD PRACTICES
FROM
ITALY**



Progetto Itaca Firenze

CLub Itaca Florence is a center for the development of socio-working autonomy for young people with a history of mental illness. It was born in 2012 following the international model of rehabilitation and social integration "Clubhouse", born in the States United in 1948 and is spread throughout the world: 332 centers in 33 countries welcome around 100,000 people.

More details:

Club Itaca Firenze is a real workplace that in no way resembles a healthcare facility.

The objective of participating in the Club's activities is to combat the chronicity of the disease, restore a positive rhythm of life, enhance self-confidence and self-esteem, and foster positive relationships. These elements are essential for creating job opportunities in collaboration with a network of partner companies, established through institutional and personal connections of the active Volunteers.

Internally, members and staff collaborate on various activities during organized working days, including:

Office activities: providing reception and secretarial services, handling minor administrative tasks, and organizing events.

Communication: writing our newsletter "Le Sirene," managing contact lists, and maintaining the Facebook page.

Cooking: preparing daily lunches, catering for events, managing budgets, and creating a "Photographic Cookbook."

Horticulture: caring for plants and planning seasonal vegetable gardens.

Maintenance: undertaking minor maintenance work and cleaning the headquarters.

Additionally, the Club offers training courses without any therapeutic purpose, conducted by volunteers or members, in subjects such as Basic and Intermediate English, Journalism and Writing, History, Horticulture, and PC skills.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mental Health Users,
Professionals

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Florence, Italy



As a member of an international movement, the experience is truly remarkable since it prevents isolation and instead connects us within a network. With the passage of time, my satisfaction in being a part of Progetto Itaca only grows stronger because I have developed friendships and engaged in various activities. The desire to work and travel has been ignited within me. Reflecting on my past self, I can confidently say that I have made tremendous progress, resulting in my current state of happiness.



<https://www.progettoitacafirenze.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/progettoitacafirenze>

https://www.tiktok.com/@clubitacafirenze?_t=8dgO6jAZbo2&_r=1

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/progetto-itaca-firenze/>



Aiutiamoli

Aiutiamoli was born in Milan in 1989 as an association of family members who wanted to seek assistance for mental illness.

Today it guarantees prevention, improvement of the quality of life and support for families.

More details:

Aiutiamoli's initiatives provide a comprehensive range of services that supplement and enhance residential, semi-residential, therapeutic, and social reintegration services for individuals experiencing mental health issues. Their goal is to develop personalized life projects accompanied by tailored therapeutic plans that are uniquely designed to meet the individual and family's specific needs.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mental Health Users,
Professionals

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Milan, Italy



help psychologist supported me and thanks to her
I'm fine now. I am happy to have known this
association.

Valentino



<http://www.aiutiamoli.it/onlus/>

[https://instagram.com/aiutiamoli_salutementale?
igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==](https://instagram.com/aiutiamoli_salutementale?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==)

[https://m.facebook.com/aiutiamolimilano?
wtsid=rdr_07Bepc1wwZvIKrSau&_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/aiutiamolimilano?wtsid=rdr_07Bepc1wwZvIKrSau&_rdr)

[https://www.linkedin.com/company/associazione-aiutiamoli-
onlus/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/associazione-aiutiamoli-onlus/)



Associazione Giulia e Matteo

The Giulia e Matteo Association, originating in Lissone, was established through the collective determination of its founding members and associates. Their mission is to initiate dialogue and cooperation to enhance understanding of mental health issues and foster a culture of unity. This organization is committed to dispelling stigmas and prejudices, especially those that unfairly burden families. Additionally, they strive to educate people about the importance of not fearing illnesses or those who are different from us.

More details:

The Giulia e Matteo Association, wants to promote the necessary actions to obtain suitable assistance and protection of people suffering from psychiatric pathologies and their families. The Association was born from the will of the founding members and associates to do their utmost to undertake a dialogue and collaboration to promote a culture of solidarity, aimed at combating prejudices on mental illnesses, overcoming, in particular, the guilt of families and to educate don't be afraid of the other. To do this, the association also believes it is essential to promote scientific dissemination on the subject.

Consequently, it intends to support the associations and institutions that deal with helping this type of patient and their family members in the complex daily life next to a person with psychiatric disorders

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mental Health Users,
Professionals

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Lissone, Italy



Giulia e Matteo

« The Giulia e Matteo Association stands as a beacon of hope in Italy, illuminating the path towards understanding and acceptance for those grappling with mental health issues. We tirelessly champion the belief that neither individuals nor their families should journey through mental illness alone. Our commitment is to dissolve stigmas, dispel fears, and foster a community of empathy, solidarity, and resilience.»

Maria



<http://www.giuliaematteo.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064539198798>



Psiche Lombardia

Association of family members and mental health volunteers. The activities are information meetings, training and support for family members, holidays for patients and their families. Furthermore, the Kepos Project is active, a therapeutic gardening activity with a work placement cooperative.

More details:

The first phase of listening and understanding involves a professional and a family member helping those presenting themselves to describe their problem and to define their expectations with respect to the support that the Association can give. In this phase, the Association will help in defining the need, highlighting that those who come to seek support inevitably speak for themselves.

It is a course that is divided into 8 meetings and is conducted by an expert family member, it will help participants regain self-confidence and the possibility of helping their loved one. There are several groups that involve discussion, listening, getting to know each other better and comparing with other families.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mental Health Users,
Professionals

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Milan, Italy



<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066957369313>

<https://www.psichelombardia.org/>



Blue Line University Canteen: Project for the employment- introduction of people with physical and mental disabilities

With the initiative, stable job opportunities were created for people with physical and mental disabilities within the staff that manages the canteen of the University of Teramo, entrusted, following a regular tender, to the Blue Line social cooperative.

More details:

The activity mainly carried out by fragile persons concerns the performance of various tasks inside the university canteen at the University of Teramo, assisted and supported by equipped operators with many years of experience in the indicated tasks, as well as by operators qualified as head chef.

The activity mainly concerns small tasks within the canteen, such for example:

- servant activities
- help cook
- administration employees
- general cleaning employees.

As well as a program of inclusion, training, development of your own work skills, and personal growth.

People involved inside the project are mainly: workers with mental health problems, physically disabled people and prisoners from the Teramo Prison.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Individuals with mental and physical limitations prisoners from Teramo.

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Teramo, Italy



<https://coopblueline.it/>



This type of activity mainly helps people with mental disabilities, as it can be seen as mental rehabilitation, for these persons will be in direct contact with university students, professors, and qualified people with many years of experience in their work (e.g. head chef). This situation can contribute to giving them back their dignity and mental serenity.

Furthermore, this work introduction path is mainly focused on training, growth, and development of the working abilities of the disadvantaged people themselves, as well as comparison with other realities such as prisoners or physically disabled people who daily deal with life with different problems from people with mental disability. This can speed them to react from their fragility situation.

Finally, at the end of the work introduction process, they will be considered rehabilitated into the world of work.



ANFFAS ORTONA: Laboratorio Experimenta

In 2005, following a training course at the Museum of Paper and Watermark in Fabriano, the "Experimenta" workshop project was realized, gradually built with the help of individuals engaged in both the public and private sectors. Over the past few years, the workshop has been equipped with professional machinery and tools, making it unique in its kind throughout the Abruzzo region.

Currently, 15 young people and adults with intellectual and/or relational disabilities are employed, supported by psychologists, technicians, and volunteer staff. The activities carried out by these individuals are aimed at learning production techniques, achieving full autonomy through personalized paths, and developing relational skills for full social inclusion. The results achieved so far make the workshop a highly professional context, comparable to a real artisanal business.

More details:

The Workshop is a small artisanal paper factory, with which various types of objects are made and then sold to the public. The young people involved are 100% responsible for the entire manufacturing process and also carry out an interesting activity as "trainers" for student classes from surrounding schools and for social and health workers interested in acquiring this artisanal technique.

In addition to the processing of paper products, the workshop has also been engaged for years in experiences related to



graphic design and the creation of packaging (labels, packaging, and more) for some product lines of companies in the Province of Chieti, especially those related to wine production and other consumer goods. Traditionally successful are the production of favors and gift items for weddings and communions, for which the waiting list is now very long.

The activities aim to provide the foundation for the acquisition of practical and especially relational skills through specific objectives:

- The development and maintenance of manual skills essential for any productive activity.
- The opportunity to interact with peers, experiencing serial work, teamwork, and the relationship with others in a productive context.
- Acquisition of skills in the use of common tools.
- Acquisition of the ability to evaluate a product and to self-assess one's work.
- Verification of motivation maintenance.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Young people and adults with intellectual and/or relational disabilities.

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Ortona, Italia



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCLB8Jm1xbU&t=30s&ab_channel=AnffasOrtonaETSAPS

<https://www.anffasortona.org/2018/07/27/laboratorio-esperimenta/>

https://youtu.be/9M3-gad_gPo



“As President of ANFFAS ORTONA, responsible of “Experimenta” Handmade Paper Workshop, I’m proud to share our journey of growth and success since 2005. Born from the desire to create a unique space, here individuals with intellectual and/or relational disabilities find not just employment but a place to develop professional and relational skills.

Thanks to psychologists, technicians, and volunteers, we’ve developed a program that offers personalized paths aimed at full autonomy and social inclusion. Our activities focus on learning handmade paper production techniques, enhancing manual skills, and evaluating work, crucial for our participants’ professional and personal growth.

Participants also become trainers for students and healthcare workers, showing that barriers can be overcome through teamwork and shared goals. Our project exemplifies how public, private sectors, and volunteers can create socially and professionally valuable initiatives. Supported by institutional funds and private donations, “Experimenta” is more than a workplace; it’s an extended family where social inclusion is a daily reality. We look forward to new challenges and continuing to make a difference”.

Ms Nadia La Torre, President of ANFFAS ORTONA



Laboratorio INCONTRO

In Montesilvano, the Progetto Incontro Association launched the “LABORATORIO INCONTRO” in 1992 as a response to the needs of adults with disabilities. Starting with one operator and four users, the workshop was part of a broader facility since 1996, the INCONTRO SOCIAL CENTER - CITY OF MONTESILVANO, managed by the Ausiliatrice Social Cooperative focusing on social and cultural activities and integration of those in need into a “normal” social context. This period saw the creation of a work initiation sector for disabled and disadvantaged users, expanding the workshop with an art master, an assistant, and five young people in distress, in addition to the six disabled users.

By 1998, this experience led to the formation of a TYPE B SOCIAL COOPERATIVE named INCONTRO, employing young disabled individuals post-rehabilitation. In 1999, a project by Pescara’s ASL for assisting severely disabled youth (under Lg. 104/92) was realized, with the Ausiliatrice Social Cooperative managing the workshop for the Association with qualified personnel.

More details:

Collaboration with companies, the challenging market conquest, and a familial, welcoming environment enable the Workshop to offer users personal dignity and recognition of their operational and work value. The goals of the Multifunctional Day Center INCONTRO Workshop are aimed at ensuring a quality of life that meets the needs and requirements of the disabled person and supports the family, as follows:

For the user: to support the individual in their overall



development towards maximum self-management, considering psychomotor, relational-affective development, and level of autonomy; to promote the quality of life with actions aimed at maintaining and developing personality and autonomies, facilitating integration with the external environment and, particularly, with the community of belonging; to promote residential autonomy pathways, in agreement with the family and in collaboration with the local Social Service.

The Multifunctional Day Center “LABORATORIO INCONTRO” welcomes severely or less severely disabled individuals (clinically, familiarly, and socially) requiring continuous and specific assistance and people with psychiatric conditions. It accommodates guests aged between 18 and 65 years. Regarding the inclusion of users with primarily psychiatric conditions, arrangements are made in accordance with the agreements defined with the user’s referring ASL and based on the project (harmony, work voucher, ergotherapy) always established between the ASL and the user.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

People with less severe disabilities and with psychiatric conditions.

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Montesilvano, Italia



<https://www.coopausiliatrice.it/>
<https://www.coopausiliatrice.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/sottopentola.mp4>



“For over three decades, we have been at the forefront of providing meaningful occupational roles and social inclusion for individuals with mental disabilities. Today, we continue to build on our rich history of integrating the differently-abled into the social and professional fabric of Montesilvano.

We see the future as a community where our users are not defined by their disabilities but by their abilities and contributions. Our partnerships with local businesses are instrumental in this vision, providing real-world opportunities for our participants to showcase their talents.

The “LABORATORIO INCONTRO” is not just a workshop; it’s a catalyst for change, breaking down barriers and forging pathways for the full social and occupational inclusion of our users. With new projects on the horizon, we are poised to redefine what is possible for mental disability inclusion, continually pushing the boundaries of empowerment and integration.

Vittorio Ravanese, Project Manager



**GOOD PRACTICES
FROM
BELGIUM**



CLUBHOUSE BRUSSELS

A clubhouse serves as a community hub for individuals struggling with mental health challenges, offering a supportive environment to enhance their social interactions and assist in their return to the workforce. Inspired by the Fountain House club in New York, this model has been adopted by approximately 350 clubs globally.

More details:

Clubhouse Brussels offers an inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with psychological vulnerabilities who are eager to engage and contribute. At Clubhouse Brussels, members are encouraged to roll up their sleeves and actively participate in shaping the community and its activities. Whether individuals are seeking opportunities to be useful, develop new skills, pursue education, or simply connect with others, Clubhouse Brussels provides a welcoming space where members can explore their interests and aspirations.

The activities at Clubhouse Brussels are diverse and member-driven, reflecting the unique needs and preferences of the community. Members have the opportunity to propose and organise activities that align with their interests and goals, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment. From educational workshops and skill-building sessions to social gatherings and collaborative projects, there is something for everyone at Clubhouse Brussels. Through meaningful engagement and collaboration, members not only benefit from personal growth and development but also contribute to the vibrant and inclusive community spirit of Clubhouse Brussels.



Moreover, Clubhouse Brussels serves as a platform for members to forge meaningful connections and build supportive relationships with others who share similar experiences and challenges. By fostering a culture of mutual support and respect, Clubhouse Brussels creates a safe and inclusive space where individuals with psychological vulnerabilities can thrive and flourish.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mental Health Users,
volunteers

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Brussels, Belgium



<https://www.clubhouse.brussels/>
<https://www.facebook.com/ClubhouseBrussels>
<https://www.instagram.com/clubhousebrussels/>



"My time in the Gardening Course is being positive in learning and in my insertion in Society.

It occupies my time where I learn to work in a team and I feel useful in ARIA. Because my past was not very satisfactory, I have been through several phases of my life in which I set goals and objectives.

I want my autonomy to be a happier person and not depend on others..."

Nuno Figueiredo



EASPD: European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

EASPD, a non-profit NGO in the disability sector, has established itself as a leading advocate for equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Through their extensive network of over 20,000 social services and umbrella associations, they promote effective and high-quality service systems.

By maintaining a professionalised office in Brussels and welcoming members from the Council of Europe member countries and the European Union, EASPD ensures that diverse perspectives are represented in their advocacy efforts, ultimately advancing the rights and opportunities of individuals with disabilities on a broad scale.

More details:

EASPD, a non-profit NGO dedicated to advancing the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities, operates with a vision to ensure that support services facilitate equal access to human rights for all individuals, regardless of disability or other factors. Their core objective revolves around the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with the provision of high-quality and user-centered services in an accountable, efficient, and effective manner.

Additionally, they advocate for fair working conditions and lifelong learning opportunities for service staff.



Among their completed projects is EqualVet, which aims to design an educational program catering to individuals with intellectual disabilities, based on CEDEFOP's guidelines. They also run ongoing projects like CO-RESP, focused on promoting socially responsible public procurement to create new job opportunities for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, the Safe4All project aims to enhance workplace safety and health for workers with disabilities through tailored training programs and resources. Through these endeavors, EASPD remains committed to promoting inclusivity and empowerment for people with disabilities across Europe.

In pursuit of their goals, EASPD focuses on three key pillars: influencing European policy, keeping members informed about relevant developments, and fostering innovation in service provision throughout Europe. Their initiatives span various projects aimed at improving labor market outcomes for persons with disabilities, facilitating the creation of decent jobs, maximizing the impact of EU legislation on employment opportunities, and assisting employers and service providers in accessing EU funds for creating employment opportunities.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

People with mental and physical disabilities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Brussels, Belgium



<https://easpd.eu/> <https://www.facebook.com/easpdbrux>

https://twitter.com/EASPD_Brussels

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/easpd-european-association-of-service-providers-for-persons-with-disabilities/>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd48JhmUCdovkm_ELw5elAw



Similes

Similes is a socio-cultural association providing support and solidarity to the families and loved ones of individuals facing psychological challenges. With one in four people likely to experience such issues, the organization's efforts are vital in addressing the profound impact mental illness can have on families.

Since 1972, Similes has been offering a range of services including information sessions, discussion meetings, and training opportunities to help families navigate these difficulties across Flanders and Brussels.

More details:

Similes operates as a supportive and inclusive association, guided by principles of solidarity, empathy, respect, and transparency. Their mission revolves around uniting families in Flanders and Brussels affected by a loved one's mental illness, providing support in areas such as caregiving, self-care, and networking. By amplifying the voices of these families within care providers and society, Similes aims to promote recovery processes for both individuals with psychological vulnerabilities and their loved ones.

In their vision, Similes seeks to destigmatize mental health issues and advocate for improved support systems that recognize the diverse needs of individuals and families. They emphasize the importance of family ties and aim to strengthen the triad between individuals with mental illness, their families, and care providers. Through their activities, including information sessions, training programs, and community-building efforts, Similes strives to foster a sense of belonging and resilience among families while promoting social participation and collaboration with other organizations in the mental health sector.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Individuals with
psychological vulnerabilities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Ixelles, Belgium



<https://nl.similes.be/>
<https://www.facebook.com/similesvzw>
<https://twitter.com/similesvzw>



Groot Eiland

Groot Eiland provides training, work experience, job coaching, and employment support to skilled Brussels residents who face significant barriers to entering the workforce.



More details:

Groot Eiland's mission is to empower Brussels residents and those from surrounding areas who are distanced from traditional job markets, providing them with opportunities to enhance their skills, creativity, and talents. Through tailored training, work experiences across various sectors such as carpentry, sales, catering, and urban agriculture, and personalized job coaching, they guide individuals towards meaningful employment.

Additionally, their employment care program offers customized support to those facing barriers preventing them from entering mainstream employment channels. They invite conscious consumers and forward-thinking companies to participate in our journey by engaging with their diverse range of services and products, all while promoting sustainability, social entrepreneurship, and an economically viable business model.

At the heart of Groot Eiland are core values centered around respect, decency, skill development, collective commitment, and sustainability. They prioritize respect for all individuals, fostering an inclusive environment where differences in origin, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, or disability are embraced. They believe in the fundamental human right to decent work and strive to cultivate a workplace culture that supports personal and professional growth for everyone.



involved. Through ongoing skill development initiatives, including training, work experiences, employment care, and coaching, we empower their employees to become stronger contributors both within our organization and in society at large.

Central to their ethos is the principle of collective effort and responsibility, encapsulated by the phrase "Tous ensemble!"—everyone commits wholeheartedly and takes ownership of their role in shaping Groot Eiland's story. They operate with a sustainable mindset, integrating social entrepreneurship and realistic business practices with a focus on long-term ecological, economic, and social impact. Sustainability, to them, means not only embracing environmentally conscious activities but also fostering an inclusive organizational culture that nurtures human development and growth.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

people with mental health conditions or disabilities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Brussels, Belgium



<http://www.ateliergrooteiland.be/>
<https://www.facebook.com/grooteiland>
<https://www.instagram.com/grooteiland>



L'Equipe

The healthcare collective prioritises relational impact over medicinal effects, offering flexible and accessible care options where users freely choose their practitioners and maintain control over their health information.

Through therapeutic communities, day services, protected housing, outpatient care, a documentation centre, and leisure activities, the collective aims to support individuals facing psychiatric, psychological, or social difficulties by fostering positive identities, self-management, and autonomy within a multidisciplinary, socially oriented framework.

More details:

The healthcare collective emphasises a relational approach over purely medicinal effects, prioritising the social dynamics of their services and personalised relationships as therapeutic tools. Users are empowered to freely choose their professional practitioner, make informed decisions about their health, and maintain control over their care provision, including access to their medical records and assurance of privacy protection. Flexibility and accessibility are key principles, recognizing that individuals are best positioned to determine what is most beneficial for their well-being.

The process of chronification is understood as a complex interplay between health evolution, encountered therapeutic frameworks, and broader social contexts rather than solely an issue of age. The focus is on assisting individuals in developing positive identities, self-managing their illness experiences, and fulfilling their social roles according to their desires, goals, and needs. A multidisciplinary approach to care is facilitated by a diverse range of resources, encompassing both human and



functional elements, with an emphasis on social relationships, interpersonal dynamics, and environmental factors to foster autonomy.

The services provided by the healthcare collective include therapeutic communities offering residential support for individuals facing psychiatric, psychological, or social challenges, alongside day services providing a welcoming environment for those experiencing similar difficulties. Protected housing options offer community living with individualised accommodations, while outpatient services cater to individuals seeking support without residential commitments. Additionally, the documentation centre offers access to a wealth of resources in the psychosocial field, and various activities and leisure opportunities are available to promote holistic well-being.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Adults experiencing psychiatric, psychological and social difficulties

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Anderlecht, Belgium



<http://www.equipe.be/>
[https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?
u=https://equipe.be/services-et-lieux/le-jade](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://equipe.be/services-et-lieux/le-jade)



CAD: Centrum Ambulante Diensten

Centrum Ambulante Diensten (CAD) offers comprehensive support for individuals with disabilities, focusing on key areas such as employment, housing, and daily living. Under the "Work Line," CAD provides tailored trajectory guidance to help individuals with occupational disabilities secure and maintain meaningful employment. In the "Buoy" line, CAD offers housing and tenant coaching, daytime activities, and solidarity housing guidance to address diverse housing and daily living needs.

Additionally, CAD assists clients in navigating Persoonsvolgende Financiering (PVF) since 2017, empowering them to make personalised choices regarding support services and care arrangements. With a commitment to individualised support and empowerment, CAD strives to enhance the lives of people with disabilities across various domains.

More details:

Within the CAD's "Work Line," individuals with occupational disabilities receive targeted trajectory guidance aimed at facilitating their integration into the workforce. This guidance encompasses a range of services, including vocational assessments to identify strengths and interests, job training to develop necessary skills, and job placement assistance to secure suitable employment opportunities. CAD's team works closely with each individual to develop personalised plans tailored to their unique abilities and career aspirations.

Ongoing support is provided to ensure successful integration and long-term retention in the workplace, with accommodations and adjustments made as necessary to accommodate the individual's needs.



Under the "Buoy" line, CAD offers comprehensive support to address the housing and daily living needs of people with disabilities. Housing and tenant coaching services assist individuals in navigating the complexities of the rental market, understanding lease agreements, and accessing appropriate housing accommodations. Additionally, CAD organises and facilitates a variety of daytime activities tailored to the interests and abilities of individuals, providing opportunities for socialisation, skill-building, and community engagement. Solidarity housing guidance helps individuals explore alternative housing arrangements, such as shared living or cooperative housing models, fostering a sense of community and mutual support among residents.

Since 2017, CAD has been authorised to provide guidance within the context of *Persoonsvolgende Financiering (PVF)*, empowering individuals with disabilities to make informed choices about their support services and care arrangements. CAD assists clients in understanding their funding options, navigating the PVF system, and developing customised plans to access the support they need to live independently and participate fully in their communities. By offering personalised guidance and support across these key areas, CAD strives to enhance the quality of life and promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in society.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Individual with a (work-) disability

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Anderlecht, Belgium



www.vzwcad.be

https://www.facebook.com/p/Centrum-ambulante-diensten-De-Boei-100070471593327/?locale=nl_BE



EBBV: European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training

The EVBB promotes the qualitative enhancement of vocational education and training (VET) across Europe and beyond. With over 65 members from both the private and public sectors, EVBB plays a crucial role in advocating for VET as a primary choice for individuals seeking education and training. Through collaboration and knowledge sharing among its diverse membership, EVBB strives to foster innovation, excellence, and inclusivity in VET practices.

More details:

One key activity of the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB) involves fostering cross-border collaboration among its diverse membership of vocational education and training providers. Through conferences, seminars, and workshops, EVBB facilitates the exchange of best practices, innovative approaches, and challenges faced in VET across different countries. These events serve as valuable platforms for networking, learning, and capacity building among professionals in the field.

Moreover, EVBB initiates joint projects and initiatives to address common challenges and promote excellence in VET. Collaborative projects funded by programs like Erasmus+ enable EVBB members to develop innovative curricula, methodologies, and tools for enhancing VET delivery and outcomes. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, these projects contribute to the continuous improvement and modernization of VET systems on a transnational scale.



Additionally, EVBB advocates for policy reforms and investments to elevate the status and attractiveness of vocational education and training. Through policy papers, position statements, and advocacy campaigns, EVBB raises awareness about the importance of VET in addressing skills gaps, promoting social inclusion, and supporting economic growth. By engaging with European institutions, national governments, and other stakeholders, EVBB plays a pivotal role in shaping policies that strengthen VET across Europe and beyond.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Trainees from companies, schools, colleges and labour market

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Brussels, Belgium



<https://evbb.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/evbb.eu/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/evbb/?originalSubdomain=be>





SOLIDAR FOUNDATION

SOLIDAR Foundation serves as a vital platform for advancing policy advocacy and lifelong learning initiatives within progressive civil society and labour movement organisations. Through active engagement in EU decision-making processes, lobbying efforts, and strategic partnerships with key stakeholders like the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) and Civil Society Europe (CSE), SOLIDAR Foundation empowers citizens, promotes democratic participation, and advocates for social justice and inclusion at both national and European levels.

Through its multifaceted approach, SOLIDAR Foundation creates a dynamic learning hub that fosters collaboration, research, and collective action to address societal challenges and advance progressive policies.

More details:

SOLIDAR Foundation operates as a pivotal force in promoting lifelong and life-wide learning for democratic participation within progressive civil society and labour movement organisations. Through strategic partnerships with entities like the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) and Civil Society Europe (CSE), the foundation engages in active lobbying, policy monitoring, and collective action projects. By empowering citizens and amplifying their voices in EU decision-making processes, SOLIDAR Foundation ensures that diverse perspectives are represented and advocated for at both national and European levels.

Moreover, SOLIDAR Foundation serves as a dynamic learning hub, addressing internal learning needs while advancing common policy and advocacy objectives. By organising projects, research initiatives, and awareness-raising campaigns, the



foundation facilitates knowledge exchange and capacity building among its member and partner organisations. Through these collaborative efforts, SOLIDAR Foundation enhances the effectiveness of progressive civil society and labour movement organisations in influencing policy outcomes and promoting social justice and inclusion across Europe.

In strategic partnership with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and other progressive stakeholders, SOLIDAR Foundation leverages its network's collective strength to champion lifelong learning initiatives and amplify the voices of marginalised communities. By fostering cooperation and solidarity among civil society actors, the foundation drives forward its mission of advancing democratic participation, social cohesion, and human rights within the European Union and beyond.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Vulnerable, marginalised populations and the minority people

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Brussels, Belgium



<https://www.solidar.org/about-solidar/>
https://twitter.com/Solidar_EU
<https://www.facebook.com/SOLIDAR.org>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/solidar/>



Le Gué centre thérapeutique et culturel

Activities oriented to the (re)discovery of the self, of one's own body, of one's own potential and of the world around him/her.



More details:

They develop various sports and artistic activities, daily management, participation in the cultural, social and civic life of the city, meetings, cooking, reflection on the world around us and current affairs.

They have an interdisciplinary team made up of psychologists, specialized educators, psychiatrists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, artistic facilitators, maintenance personnel, directors, administrative assistants.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Young people with mental disabilities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Woluwe-Saint-Lambert,
Belgium

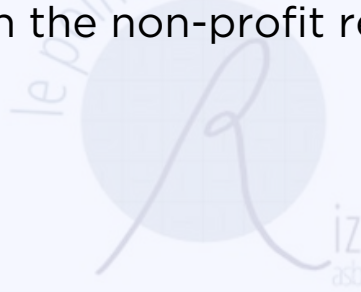


<https://www.le-gue.be/>



LE POINT DE RIZ

Have work experience in the non-profit restaurant.



More details:

functions as a transitional space that allows people to leave isolation or the care network to concretely resume the path of a professional project and participate in the life of society.

They offer individual follow-up through support for the experience lived within the restaurant, the construction of a professional project, preparation for the job search, training and follow-up during employment.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

General people with mental disabilities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Saint-Josse -Ten- Noode,
Belgium



<https://platformbxl.brussels/fr/repertoire/le-point-de-riz>



KMOP POLICY CENTER

E-learning course to support work-life balance.
Curriculum with practical advice on work-life balance.
Workbook on self-care for informal carers.
Guidance on CV writing and interview tips
Counselling guidelines for adult education practitioners

More details:

Taking into account their experience in the provision of social services, they analyse, design and recommend policies that promote social welfare, individual well-being and equal opportunities, bringing about real changes for people and communities.

Have a day centre for young adults and is appointed for the psychosocial rehabilitation of young adults (20-40 years old) with moderate mental and psychological difficulties and intellectual disabilities who live with their families, have a relative good degree of functionality, they do not have the capacity however to find and keep a job in the labour market.

The purpose of the Day Center is to offer the recipients of its services a path of gaining more skills, greater autonomy and recognition of their power in order to exercise their rights as citizens.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

People with mental disabilities for job search

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Athens, Greece



<https://www.kmop.gr/>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/kmop/>



**GOOD PRACTICES
FROM
GREECE**



Traditional Social Kitchen “Evzin”

Koispe-Evzin operates as a social enterprise with a mission to reintegrate marginalized social groups into the workforce, adhering to established legal employment structures and democratic decision-making methods. Its main focus is not profit-making, but rather creating an equitable society with fair professional opportunities and rights for individuals dealing with mental health issues.

At our two Kouzini, we serve homemade dishes made with fresh ingredients and pure olive oil, ensuring that every meal you receive is not only delicious but also healthy, and offered at very affordable prices.

EV ZEIN, a chain of ready-to-eat food outlets with its initial branches in Egaleo and Nea Smyrni, has rapidly gained popularity in Greece as a top choice for Takeaway and Delivery dining options.

All our meals are freshly prepared on the same morning in our new, privately-owned, cutting-edge preparation facility. This facility upholds the highest standards of quality and hygiene, certified with ISO 22000:2005 and HACCP.

More details:

This social enterprise engages in business activities aimed at providing top-notch services and products, adhering to international certification norms and maintaining affordable pricing for broad accessibility. Furthermore, half of the positions in the Cooperative are held by community members facing psychosocial challenges. The earnings are reinvested into initiating more projects, thereby generating additional employment opportunities.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

People with psychosocial problems, mental health professionals, public or private legal entities

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Athens, Greece



“The fact that you see them enjoying themselves is the most important thing. I might get too tired because they weren’t professional cooks to say “do this, cut that” and walk away. I had to be on top, but their joy filled me up. Now, they call me and ask me if we’re opening and when we’re starting. They really want it.”

Giorgos Katsigiannis



<https://kosp-euzin.gr/>



IMPE Erasmus+ Project: Improving of People with Mental Health Issues in Training and Work

The project aimed to improve the expertise of mentors of people with mental health issues attending VET training, work-based learning and work. Professional mentors were provided with the necessary tools and techniques to support people with mental health problems during delivery of career guidance and VET training.

Also, mentors in the workplace (employers, mentors, supervisors and coworkers) were provided with guidelines and rising awareness content on how to facilitate work insertion of people with mental health problems.

More details:

The project entailed the development of a handbook on facilitating training and work insertion of people with mental health issues, an e-course on supporting the insertion in training and work of people with mental health issues addressed to professional mentors (trainers, career counselors, etc), as well as an e-course addressed to not professional mentors (entrepreneurs, coworkers, supervisors).

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Mentors, mental health professionals, stakeholders and people with mental health problems

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Spain



<http://www.impe-project.eu/index.html>

https://www.facebook.com/impe.project.eu/?ref=page_internal



"Social Dialogue Centre" of PEPSAEE: Panhellenic Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Vocational Reintegration

The Specialized Day Centre "Social Dialogue Centre" is an alternative psychosocial rehabilitation unit. It offers its services in the area of professional integration and reintegration of mental health service recipients as well as of the implementation of alternative and innovative actions to destigmatize mental illness.

It seeks to improve the recipients' quality of life, to remove social inequalities and prejudice, and engage in dialogue with society, emphasizing the therapeutic and restorative function of art and culture.

More details:

The Specialized Day Centre "Centre for Social Dialogue" has two offices, one aimed at the Support of Employment & Social Entrepreneurship and another aimed at the Alternative Reintegration Actions.

The main objectives of the Specialized Day Centre "Social Dialogue Centre" are:

- To eliminate social inequalities and transform beneficiaries into active citizens.
- To support people with psychosocial difficulties towards their integration into the labour market.
- To engage mental health service recipients in creative employment, broaden their social and personal skills,



- reintegrate them, assist their socialisation through participation in the organisation, and implement recreational and cultural activities.
- To implement information and community education programmes.
- To raise awareness and involve local government and the community in the fight against stigma.
- To develop volunteerism and utilize the volunteer network for the benefit of those served.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Individuals with specific mental challenges

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Athens, Greece



<https://shorturl.at/6Afi9>
<https://www.facebook.com/PEPSAEE.KKD/>



“The Center for Social Dialogue has played a significant role in empowering and motivating me, as well as facilitating my communication on a global scale. Thanks to this center, I’ve connected with fellow beneficiaries, engaging with them through a dedicated social media platform. Being part of the photography group has allowed me to showcase my photography skills and gain recognition. Additionally, I’m fortunate to have a social worker (a reference person) who provides invaluable assistance, aiding me in pursuing employment opportunities within my field of interest.”

George Michalis, General Secretary,
Self-representation, January 12, 2022



PEPSAEE: Employment and Social Entrepreneurship Support Office

The focus of the Employment & Social Entrepreneurship Support Office is on individuals aged 18 to 65 who experience psychosocial challenges. Our primary aim is to assist them in discovering and retaining suitable employment, whether in the open job market or within protected workplaces. Our guiding principle is rooted in the fundamental entitlement and potential of all individuals to engage in work.

We firmly believe that with tailored and ongoing assistance, those encountering diverse psychosocial obstacles can successfully uncover and, most importantly, uphold employment opportunities.

More details:

To accomplish the aforementioned objective, the following strategies are implemented:

- Personalised and group-oriented professional counselling sessions.
- Enhancement of vocational skills.
- Acquisition of job search techniques.
- Participation in either employment or vocational training programs.
- Sustaining job stability through ongoing support.
- Promoting awareness among employers and the general public about work-related issues faced by individuals with psychosocial challenges, with the intention of dispelling biases.
- Establishment of an Employers Network.



- Collaboration with agencies and mental health professionals to enhance the effectiveness of employment support for those with psychosocial difficulties
- Coordination with Co.S.P.E and Social Cooperative Enterprises
- Partnership with OAED (Manpower Employment Organization) as well as with institutional bodies and structures related to employment and training
- Training of mental health practitioners in the realm of employment assistance for individuals with psychosocial difficulties.
- Development of innovative tools and methodologies for providing professional guidance to individuals with psychosocial challenges.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Employment advisors

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Greece





State law 4488/2017-art.23

Enacted by the Greek Parliament

The newly implemented state law delivers the opportunity for people with mental health issues to explore the field of the free labor market, while maintaining their social benefits paid by the government.

More details:

- 1.State law which was enacted in continuation of a state law of 1999 which initiated the possibility of people with mental health issues working in social cooperatives. The first law enabled these people to earn their salary in addition to any social benefits they were entitled to by the government due to their diagnosis. People with mental health issues were restricted to only working in the social firms, otherwise their benefits would be cut off immediately, if they joined the workforce, even for a day. People were worried that because of their mental health state they wouldn't be able to maintain any job, so they were prevented from access more job opportunities and enter the workforce.
- 2.The social cooperatives provided a limited number of positions available throughout the country, in comparison to the number of people affected by mental health problems. In addition, the field of work is also limited.
- 3.The change of the state law provides greater impact for people with mental health issues. They are provided with the opportunity to choose between different sectors, pursuit a career after their studies in their domain of interest. Most importantly, they can realise their goal, be integrated as a working member of a community, actively taking upon that role, as every citizen should be able to, without discrimination.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Members of the Greek Parliament,
Ministry of Labor and Social
Affairs, the Ministry of Health,
Federation “ARGO”

WHERE WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Greece



<https://ypergasias.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/%CE%BD.-4488-2017-%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A-%CE%91-137-2017.pdf>



USEFUL RESOURCES

Videos for adults with mental health challenges and exploring employment opportunities.

Comprehensive Guide to Meaningful Employment for Adults with Mental Health Challenges.

External Links:

www.sharing4employment.eu

www.linkedin.com/company/ecare4pd

www.linkedin.com/company/sharing4employment



The Sharing4employment project



Co-funded by
the European Union