

## **Mental Health Workshop**

Holiday Inn/Cambridge, Ontario  
November 16, 2016 – 9am

Thanks to my Local Union for allowing me to attend the CUPE District Council's Mental Health Workshop. This 2 ½ day course covered a lot of general information which will segue into more detailed workshops for the future.

Blaine Morin began the workshop discussing statistics such as “1 in 3 people have Mental Illness”. This was immediately disputed noting the numbers were thought to be much higher. Using the classroom as a guideline, it turns out everyone in the classroom has been affected by mental health either directly or indirectly. Your personal wellness is paramount – you can't look after anyone else if you can't look after yourself – akin it to a drowning person.

Over 4,000 people a year take their own lives in Canada – and these are the reported cases. Pros and cons of prevention were covered (ie: investigations, complacency, experience) and some links were touched on as well.

The class was divided into groups of 4 or 5 and worked on various topics of discussion which were then presented to the class. Items such as focusing on the hazard, not the incident to rectify a worker's problems at work – don't get drawn into being the member's therapist. You are not trained for this and cannot direct a diagnosis. Only focus on the root problem (ie: harassment from a supervisor). For other issues, direct the member to help groups (ie: Suicide Prevention, etc.).

On the second and third days, Marlene Arruda ran the class and continued with discussions such as Mental Health vs. Mental Illness; and a next-step course such as Mental Health – First Aid.

The two most important things I took away from the course is not to be the member's therapist or psychologist but to direct them but do not force them to help themselves. You can't make people seek help. And the most important item which was very disturbing is most people who commit suicide hide it SO well, even their closest friends don't realize how truly troubled and desperate that person is.

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