

Woman Takes Mental Health Day, the Internet Explodes (and Her Boss Had the Perfect 3-Sentence Response)

By Peter Economy

Anyone who has a job knows the need to take an occasional "mental health day" -- a day or two off work to unplug, relax, and relieve some of the stress that we all feel from time to time on the job.

A couple weeks ago, web developer Madalyn Parker made her own mental health day (actually, it was two days) very public by posting on Twitter an exchange she had with her boss, Ben Congleton -- CEO of Ann Arbor, Michigan-based live-chat software developer Olark.

According to Madalyn, she needed the time off to focus on her well-being, which was being stretched very thin at the time. She told CNN, "I had experienced several nights of insomnia and was poorly rested and also having lots of suicidal thoughts, which make it difficult to accomplish much at work."

So Madalyn sent a message to her team:

Hey team,

I'm taking today and tomorrow to focus on my mental health.
Hopefully I'll be back next week refreshed and back to 100%.

Thanks

Among the messages Madalyn received in response was one from her boss. Instead of being mad or punishing her for taking time away from her busy job or for using her sick leave to take a mental health day off, he went out of his way to praise her decision in the following three sentences:

Hey Madalyn,

I just wanted to personally thank you for sending emails like this. Every time you do, I use it as a reminder of the importance of using sick days for mental health -- I can't believe this is not standard practice at all organizations. You are an example to us all, and help cut through the stigma so we can all bring our whole selves to work.

As leaders, it's up to us to set the example for everyone else to follow. Our people are going to be much happier and much more effective when they are able to bring 100 percent of themselves to their job -- and to your customers.

The next time one of your employees wants to take a mental health day off, be sure to applaud them instead of punishing them. Your organization, your people, and your bottom line will all be the better for it.

*While Peter Economy has spent the better part of two decades of his life slugging it out mano a mano in the management trenches, he is now a full-time ghostwriter and bestselling author of more than 85 books -- including *Managing for Dummies*, *Everything I Learned About Life I Learned in Dance Class*, and *User Story Mapping: Discover the Whole Story, Build the Right Product* -- with total sales in excess of two million copies. He has also served as associate editor for *Leader to Leader* for more than 12 years, where he has worked on projects with the likes of Jim Collins, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and many other top management and leadership thinkers.*

[Visit Peter Economy at Inc.](#)

[@bizzwriter](#)