

Beyond employee resilience: A focus on mental wellness in the workplace

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Mental wellness in the workplace?



Mental health

VS



Mental wellness

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25%

of adults will experience a
diagnosable mental illness
each year

50%

of them will
go untreated

50%

of adults over their lifetime
will experience a diagnosable
mental illness

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Learn About Mental Health (<http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/>)

>80%

of employees treated for mental illness report
improved levels of work efficacy and satisfaction

American Psychiatric Association's Center for Workplace Mental Health: (www.workplacementalhealth.org)

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Those who typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday are more than three times as likely to say they intend to seek employment elsewhere in the next year (**71% vs. 20%**)

59% report that workplace stress negatively impacts performance

Major causes of workplace stress include:

- 56% Low salaries
- 54% Long hours
- 52% Lack of growth or advancement opportunities
- 50% Too heavy of a workload
- 50% lack of adequate paid time off or sick leave
- 50% Commuting

American Psychological Association's 2021 Work and Well-being Survey results
(www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-well-being/compounding-pressure-2021)

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The vast majority (**87%**) of employees think actions from their employer would help their mental health

Action employers could do that employees would consider helpful:

- 37% Providing mental health resources
- 35% Regularly recognizing employee contributions
- 34% Flexible hours
- 33% More money

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Traditional resilience model:

- Employer provides basic mental health and wellness benefits
- Employees avail themselves of these benefits on their own time
- Encourage employees to change their lifestyles

The responsibility for change is on the employee

- Practice mindfulness
- Exercise more
- Healthy diet
- Seek professional treatment
- Manage your stress!

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Resilience model is missing the bigger picture. Work is the largest source of stress for employees.

In a 2023 report from Calm* surveying over 2000 people:

The number one source of stress is workplace stress (**50%**)

Whether or not you believe it, your employees do – and that's what matters

*<https://business.calm.com/resources/guides/2023-mental-health-benefits-industry-benchmarking-report/>

Ways to measure and observe mental wellness in the workplace

- Surveys
- Listening sessions
- Regular check-ins
- Absenteeism (missed work and call-offs)
- Presenteeism (present but disengaged)
- Increase in disability / workers' compensation claims
- Conflicts with coworkers and management
- Altercations with the public
- *Traumatic workplace event*

Observable symptoms of burnout

- Absenteeism (missed work and call-offs)
- Presenteeism (present but disengaged)
- Increase in disability / workers' compensation claims
- Conflicts with coworkers and management
- Altercations with the public
- Mistakes or decrease in productivity

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While surveys, claims, attendance, and performance issues are all easily(ish) observable, how do you get to the actual mood of your employees.

- Listening sessions
- Regular check-ins

The main ingredient in active listening is **EMPATHY**

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EMPATHY

“The ability to understand and share the feelings of another”

Ability: It’s a skill, not a trait.

Understand: It requires curiosity and a willingness to understand.

Share: There is a connection.

Feelings: It goes beyond just observation. It’s experiential.

Another: It’s not your own feelings, it’s experiencing this WITH someone.

Empathy is a skill

Like musical talent, some are born with a greater innate gift for empathy than others, but we can all improve with practice.

Only a very small percentage truly lack the capacity for empathy.

To improve, you must:

- Practice, practice, practice
- Focus on listening (not hearing)
- Put judgment aside
- Develop imagination
- Develop curiosity
- Practice focus when communicating with others one on one

“Oh great, now I’m going to be my employees’ therapist at work...”

Benefits of empathy and active listening:

- Engagement with your employees
- Trust and loyalty are built
- Caring for their wellbeing (mental wellness) – and they feel this from you
- More information available so you can better manage change
- Responsiveness and solutions that are in your control

Starting a check-in or listening session

- Small talk is big talk sometimes
- Listen for pauses, pay attention to eye contact
- Inquire about their lives outside of work and listen to their answers
- Remember details of family members or important details and bring them up during subsequent conversations
- Ask about their feelings
- Reflect on and share your own feelings – not a dump session for you
- Selective self-disclosure
- Convey empathy – “I imagine that’s hard”
“That’s exciting for you”

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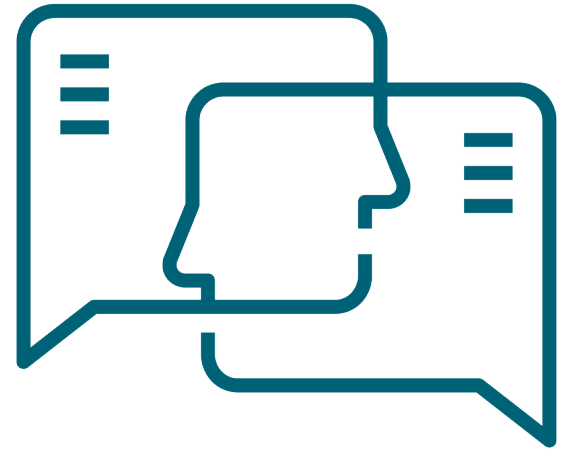
Beyond an emotional connection with employees to help them feel valued and seen, here are a few suggestions on addressing ongoing stress in the workplace:

- **Work schedules** – give enough advanced notice to allow for predictability
- **Flexibility when able** (transparency when not able)
- **Recognition of efforts**
- **Mission driven work** – What’s the purpose of the work? How are we making a difference?
- **Other:**
 - **Compensation**
 - **Benefits** – EAP, health and wellness benefits, education, apps, etc.
 - **Time off policies**
 - **Advancement and development opportunities**

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Mental Wellness
in the workplace



Engagement

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Questions / discussion