

At-a-glance: Cultivating mental well-being in the workplace

In recent years, mental health in the workplace has become a top priority for employers, as well as financial security and social connectedness. Since the pandemic, workplace well-being programs have evolved from focusing on topics such as physical inactivity, nutrition, weight, and tobacco use, to being more inclusive of topics in mental, emotional, and behavioral health and well-being.

Historically, mental health has often taken a back seat in workplace well-being programs. While **50%** of all Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime, only **1 in 3** adults seek help.¹ Additionally, employees are **40%** more likely to be disengaged when struggling with a mental health challenge.² These staggering numbers demonstrate the dire need to expand well-being program offerings to include mental health as an area of focus.

8 in 10
employees
say they are
at risk of burnout³

Strategies and resources to cultivate mental well-being

Whether you are seeking to enhance your current well-being program, or in the initial planning phase, there are several actions that you may take to cultivate mental well-being in the workplace. The three major focus areas include destigmatizing mental health, expanding access to behavioral care, and focusing on holistic health.



Destigmatizing mental health

To cultivate mental well-being in the workplace, you must start from the root of the matter by destigmatizing mental health. Examples of how to destigmatize mental health in the workplace include:

- Start with leadership – identify an executive champion to be an advocate for the anti-stigma efforts
- Promote anti-stigma campaigns
- Allow flexible work schedules to seek care during work hours
- Sharing personal stories of employees who have a mental health success story
- Engage in open dialogue regarding mental health (prevalence, education, support, resources)
- Offer ongoing mental health education and training
- Train management to recognize the signs of mental illness and how to best support employees



Expand Access to Behavioral Care

Next, work with your Health Engagement Team to build a benefits strategy that provides access to a full continuum of solutions, such as:

- Traditional in-person counseling
- Virtual counseling
- Onsite counselors or health coaches at the worksite
- Online resources (Psych Hub, Self-Care by Able To, Live & Work Well)
- No or low-cost counseling (EAP, Talk Space)

Focus on Holistic Health

While physical health is crucial to one's health status, holistic health should be the core of a well-being program, as it recognizes the importance of mental health on one's overall well-being. You may focus on holistic health by implementing mindful worksite strategies, as well as managing burnout and supporting employee emotional resilience.



Mindful worksite strategies include:

- Offering onsite mindfulness and meditation classes before or after work, or during the lunch hour
- Encouraging breaks from technology
- Designating a “quiet room” to allow space for employees to relax and re-energize
- Securing leadership participation and support in mindfulness-based programs
- Providing paid time off for volunteer work



Manage burnout and support employee emotional resilience by:

- Providing flexible work schedules to encourage work/life balance
- Encouraging employees to take their PTO
- Actively mitigate an overwhelming workload
- Offering skills training opportunities to learn skills to increase resiliency
- Offering social activities such as picnics, happy hours, or volunteer opportunities for employees to gather to laugh, relax and chat during or after work hours

A successful health & well-being program takes a holistic approach and acknowledges that health & well-being goes beyond physical health and includes mental wellbeing. UnitedHealthcare offers solutions, tools and resources that can support the mental well-being of your employees. For additional resources, please work with your UnitedHealthcare team.

Sources:

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mental Health. www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth. June 2021. Accessed April 2023.

² Willis Towers Watson. Worsening Emotional and Social Wellbeing Takes a Toll on Productivity. <https://www.wtwco.com/en-us/insights/2021/02/worsening-emotional-and-social-wellbeing-takes-toll-on-productivity>. February 2021. Accessed April 2023.

³ Mercer. Rise of the Relatable Organization, 2022 Global Talent Trends Study. www.mercer.com. April 2022. Accessed April 2023.