



WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

MENTAL WELLNESS

TRUTH BEHIND THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Life follows your employees into work each day. It sits in unread text messages on a man's phone who fought with his wife last night. It's in a mother's purse that still holds the lunch she forgot to hand to her child's teacher this morning. It lives in the heads of every employee dealing with everyday life. And it's unrealistic for organizations to expect employees to leave life at home.

Visualize the word "work" on the left side of a scale and "life" on the right side as the symbol most often used to depict the notion of "work-life balance". Sometimes the scale tips all the way left, sometimes right, but rarely centered. Let's face it, work is a huge part of life. Those two words shouldn't even be opposing each other since this idea of perfect balance is outdated.

The stigma that mental wellbeing is a taboo topic in the workplace is ending, and it's time for organizations to fully support employees' mental health at work. Over 43 million American adults (18%) have a mental health condition, yet 56% are not receiving treatment¹. It is also estimated that, at any given time, one in five working-age adults has a mental health problem². Furthermore, the World Health Organization found that 12 billion working days will be lost to depression and anxiety each year up to the year 2030³, which equates to an annual loss to the global economy of \$925 billion⁴!

HELP YOUR EMPLOYEES

How do organizations support employees' mental wellness without feeling too intrusive, aggressive, or offensive?

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS

- * REFRAME YOUR EAP (OR IF YOU DON'T CURRENTLY OFFER ONE, CONSIDER IT)**
Employee Assistance Programs still have the stigma of being for the severely depressed or mentally ill. But that's far from the truth. **EAPs can help employees find child care providers, handle stress, navigate relationship struggles, discuss financial problems, and even obtain legal advice.** Rethink how your EAP is promoted to employees and explain that it's perfectly okay (and encouraged) to reach out. And asking leadership to share anecdotal stories of how EAP's have helped them would go a long way!
- * PROVIDE "MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID" TRAINING**
Consider having key employees (HR folks, managers, leadership) trained in "mental health first aid". This training aims to teach employees **how to recognize when employees may be struggling** and how to connect with the individual to get them the help they may need.
- * SEEK INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**
Numerous companies have developed solutions focused solely on mental wellness that employers can implement, and they're not EAP's. They provide licensed therapists at the tap of a button on your phone, self-paced programs, and web-based learning on 100's of mental health topics. **Find a partner (IMA can help) that can confidentially and effectively support your employees' needs.**
- * MAKE IT PART OF YOUR CULTURE**
Encourage managers and leaders to regularly discuss mental wellness with employees. Continually monitor employee workloads and that elusive "work-life balance" to know when someone may be struggling. Take note when employees come in early, leave late, and email on nights/weekends. Make it commonplace to discuss how things are going with employees, both at home and at work. Some people will share, some won't, but at least you've opened the door and created a supportive and safe environment for your team. Remind employees that life is part of work, and it's okay to need additional support to juggle it all.
- * COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!**
If you offer an EAP or other solution, consistently remind employees it exists. Employees won't remember something you told them 3 months ago at open enrollment, so ensure everyone knows all the resources you offer. Heighten your communication efforts during busy seasons and holidays to reiterate that you truly do care. Challenges and new obstacles pop up at any given time, so make sure your employees know who to contact when they need help. Your employees spend most of their waking hours at work – it's just good business practice to provide resources and support to keep them healthy and thriving.



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