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 after an argument with a significant other. It's in a mother's purse that holds the lunch she forgot to hand to her child's teacher this morning. It's the worry and concern over the care of an aging parent. Life lives in the head 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. Sometimes the scale tips all the way left, sometimes right, but rarely is it centered. Work is a huge part of life, offering monetary compensation as well as the potential for personal fulfillment. Rather than being diametrically opposed, and seeking out the fabled "work/life balance," companies should strive to integrate work and life to help individuals achieve their own idea of what balance looks like.

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 treatment[1]. Furthermore, the World Health Organization found that 12 billion working days will be lost to depression and anxiety each year up to the year 2030[2], which equates to an annual loss to the global economy of $925 billion[3]!

[1] The State of Mental Health in America 2018, Mental Health America, 2017

[2] World Health Organization, Scaling-up treatment of depression and anxiety: a global return on investment analysis, April 12, 2016

[3] Stewart WF, Ricci JA, Chee E, Hahn SR, Morganstein D. Cost of lost productive work time among US workers with depression. JAMA. 2003 Jun 18;289(23):3135-3144

How Do Organizations Support Employees' Mental Wellness
Without Being Too Intrusive 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 major life issues only, 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. Asking leadership to share anecdotal stories of how EAPs have helped them would go a long way toward promoting this kind of support.

Provide "Mental Health First Aid" Training

+ Consider having key employees (HR associates, managers or leadership) trained in "mental health first aid". This training teaches individuals 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 tech-based solutions focused solely on mental wellness that employers can implement, and they're not EAPs. They provide licensed therapists at the tap of a button on your phone, self-paced programs and web-based learning on hundreds of mental health topics. Find a partner (IMA can help) that can confidentially and effectively support your employees' vast needs.

Make It Part Of Your Culture

+ Encourage managers and leaders to regularly discuss mental wellness with employees. Make sure that your leaders understand or are trained on how to have these conversations appropriately. Help them to understand company expectations so they can continually monitor employee workloads and know when someone may be struggling. Once managers and employees feel comfortable having these conversations, set an example by making it commonplace to have ongoing discussions about 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 three 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 their wellbeing is important to the company. 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 are key to your company's past and future success. Providing resources and support to keep them healthy and thriving, both physically and mentally, is just good business practice. We urge all employers to proactively find the programs and support that are right for your unique employees. It's not always easy to measure results, but your efforts are important and could have a major impact by helping your employees feel supported and valued.

JILL DIGRAPPA
IMA Whole Health Wellness Advisor
jill.digrappa@imacorp.com
303.615.7668