

Your employees may be struggling: Here are 10 ways to foster mental health in the workplace



It's no secret that many employees struggle with their mental health. In 2022, more than 1 in 4 Americans reported feeling symptoms of an anxiety disorder or depression.¹

The impact is staggering and tragic, and business leaders witness the human consequences every day. When you make a purposeful commitment to the emotional wellness of your staff, you'll see positive results for employees, their families, workplace culture and the bottom line, too.

Take these steps to help support your employees and bolster their mental health.

1. Embrace flexibility.

Employees today are juggling many different hats and that can take its toll on their mental health. That's why many are now prioritizing how they want to structure their professional lives, and its frequently around their personal lives.² Work flexibility can help employees feel more in control, which can reduce stress.

2. Prioritize workloads.

When someone is going through a difficult time, a heavy workload can be debilitating. Communicate clearly with employees about what parts of their jobs are most important and what can wait.

3. Talk openly and often about mental health.

Mental health struggles are too often stigmatized, especially in the workplace. When leaders share their own stories, it sends a message to the entire team that mental illness isn't something to be ashamed of.

4. Provide many access points to mental health services.

Mental health coverage is critical, but that shouldn't be the only avenue for people to get help. Not everyone is ready or able to see a therapist in person; that's where telehealth appointments and digital mental health platforms can be useful. Some employees might prefer using a website or app with resources to support emotional well-being; others might call a confidential employee assistance hotline. Meet Walmart Health Virtual Care (WHVC), brought to you by Aflac. WHVC telehealth service service allows your employees to connect to a board-certified, U.S.-licensed medical provider or licensed behavioral health specialist from almost any location.



5. Spread the word about your EAP and make the terms more generous if possible.

Employee assistance programs often go unused because many employees aren't aware their employer offers an EAP program.³ Make sure your workforce is aware of their EAP benefits and enhance them if you can by adding more free appointments or extending benefits to dependents, for example.

6. Advocate for your employees with your insurer.

Less than half of people with mental health problems received treatment in 2021.⁴ Costs and availability are two of the largest barriers. Thirty-eight percent of Americans say they or a family member postponed medical treatment in 2022 due to costs.⁵ Businesses can stress to insurance companies that mental health coverage and access is important. It might not change anything in the short term, but the more that businesses make their needs known, the more insurance carriers can respond to those needs.

7. Train managers to spot trouble.

If an employee's performance changes in a negative way, don't assume they lack initiative or have checked out. Consider that a mental health issue could be at play, especially if the person's behavior is out of character. Train managers to spot [symptoms of depression and anxiety](#), as well as [warning signs of suicide](#).

8. Don't forget financial health.

Anything you can do to help reduce employees' financial concerns — more pay, more benefits, more education — is going to be a positive for their mental health. Supplemental insurance plans can help your staff members with unexpected health care costs not covered by health insurance.

9. Be upfront.

In the wake of the pandemic, employers are reorganizing and implementing other structural changes. Speaking openly and directly about personnel changes can help reduce catastrophic thinking among your workforce.

10. Respect boundaries.

If your workplace culture is that emails sent after hours must be responded to immediately, that's going to increase stress and burnout. Some people like to work at odd hours; others believe evenings are sacred. Encourage your employees to share their preferences about when they work and how they like to be contacted, then encourage everyone to respect them — and model both of those behaviors yourself.



Want to learn how Aflac can help support your workforce's mental health? Contact your Aflac benefits advisor or [visit Aflac.com/business](https://www.aflac.com/business).

¹ Fortune Well. "23% of workers say employers are offering new mental health benefits. But is it enough? ". Published 4.29.2022. [Accessed 4.17.2023.](#)

² Forbes. Employees want flexibility and an inclusive culture. Published 5.02.2022. [Accessed 4.17.2023.](#)

³ Nivati. "The Step-by-Step Guide to Increase EAP Utilization." Published 8.13.2021. [Accessed 4.17.2023.](#)

⁴ National Alliance on Mental Illness. "Mental Health by the Numbers." Last updated December 2022. [Accessed 4.5.2023.](#)

⁵ Gallup. Record High in U.S. Put Off Medical Care Due to Cost in 2022. Published 1.17.2023. [Accessed 4.17.2023.](#)

⁶ EBN. "Employers know their mental health benefits aren't cutting it." Published 5.3.2023. [Accessed 5.15.2023.](#)

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