SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND GOVERNOR'S INSTITUTE

YOU MATTER

Text. Call. Chat.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

PEP23-23-08-03-002
331859-K

Peer Warmline

1-855-Peers NC

Call someone who understands 24/7

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PRN Promise Resource Network

GETTY IMAGES

INVESTING IN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

BY CAROLINE BARNHILL

It's no surprise that investing in mental-health-friendly benefits is an added expense for companies – but, it turns out, not investing in them could be just as costly. According to Gallup's 2023 "State of the Global Workplace" report, 62% of employees are not engaged – and 15% are actively disengaged. Stress at work continues to be a critical issue. In the U.S. and Canada, the study found that 49% of survey respondents reported experiencing frequent stress as recent as the previous day. The cost of disengagement? A staggering $8.9 trillion in global GDP.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

BUT IS WELLNESS THE ANSWER?

Many experts have shown well-being and productivity are linked, and when employers create a culture that prioritizes well-being and engagement, reductions in workplace burnout often follow. As these conversations around mental health and wellness become more commonplace in the broader culture, it's not surprising that businesses are taking note.

However, determining how to invest in wellness and mental health initiatives is not a one-size-fits-all approach, says Patrick Flynn, assistant professor of human resource management at NC State's Poole College of Management. "When it comes to mental health and wellness, there's consensus among business leaders that it's an important topic but there is nuance in how to embrace and invest in it – and what sorts of resources companies should create or provide themselves, versus what should be included in a benefits package," Flynn explains.

Take Flynn's employer as an example. In addition to expanding onsite counseling resources and other free programs to promote wellness, such as drop-in mindfulness sessions and dog therapy events known as "Pause for Paws," NC State began offering Wellness Days for students, staff and faculty in 2022. As one of the region's largest employers, the university has the resources and infrastructure to create and offer these wellness programs and supports.

And they aren't alone. Employers across the globe offer mental health and wellness programs in various ways. Employee assistance programs (EAPs) are work-based intervention programs that provide access to counseling, referrals and assessments. Some allow employees to expense wellness and fitness apps or offer discounts and subsidies for gym memberships or yoga classes. Some larger companies even create employee resource groups to provide safe spaces for employees to connect and support one another based on shared backgrounds, interests or experiences.

"When it comes to mental health and wellness, there's consensus among business leaders that it's an important topic but there is nuance in how to embrace and invest in it..."

PATRICK FLYNN
Poole College of Management
NC State University

Local law firm Wyrick Robbins, which employs approximately 175 individuals in the Triangle, offers a robust wellness program. In addition to a benefits package and EAP program, the firm hosts monthly well-being events throughout the year – from yoga sessions to biometric screenings to financial wellness events.

"This past year, one of our events focused on improving mental health in the workplace. We partnered with the corporate and community health group at WakeMed and the entire presentation was so well-received by our staff," says Karen Webster, benefits and payroll administrator at Wyrick Robbins. "I had senior partners stop me to mention how much they appreciated the event and found the topic extremely relatable. Our firm's wellness committee decided the topic was something we needed to bring back every year so our newer staff members get to hear it as well."

This month, the firm is prioritizing employee health by hosting a "gratitude challenge" as their monthly event.

"We wanted to choose something to carry us through the holidays that employees could do on their own time," Webster adds. "We know focusing on gratitude helps mental health and overall well-being, so we hope this challenge centers our employees during a busy time of year."

SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

While robust programs like the ones offered by Wyrick Robbins are beneficial in promoting health and well-being, that doesn't mean small businesses can't find creative ways to do the same.

Foundations Family Therapy, a team of licensed therapists located in offices across the Triangle, offers a small business mental health wellness membership, which is designed for businesses that are not able to provide benefits like health insurance.

"We hope this allows companies to provide mental wellness programming at a reduced rate, which can help with their employee retention and hiring incentives," says Elizabeth Stevens, Foundations Family Therapy's director of operations.

"A concern many business owners have when it comes to thinking through wellness offerings is the cost. However, a growing body of research shows how human interaction with nature decreases stress and increases well-being," Flynn says. "So instituting things like walking meetings, or built-in time during that day for employees to step out and get some fresh air – those are low-cost, high-impact interventions that any business could incorporate."

Some local companies have gotten creative in their approach. In the summer of 2024, Raleigh-based E&V Strategic Communications started an office garden where the team planted and harvested fresh produce for employees to bring home for friends and family. Several companies periodically offer free yoga classes or mindfulness sessions. The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO), a national think tank dedicated to advancing best practices in workplace health and well-being, encourages volunteering as a team.

"We are a small office but we incorporated a volunteerism policy

"Our firm's wellness committee decided the topic was something we needed to bring back every year so our newer staff members get to hear it as well."

KAREN WEBSTER
Wyrick Robbins

because we know that helps create a social connection and gives our employees a sense of purpose," says Karen Moseley, HERO's president and CEO. "Our policy helps our employees authentically contribute to the communities where we work and whom we serve. We've found volunteerism is one of the most effective ways to role model for our HERO members a prime example of what we mean by our vision of advancing well-being of employees and communities."

However small, researchers believe these intentional efforts hold promise for a significant, long-term impact.

"There is a strong connection between brain health, neurological health and mental health and workplace performance," Moseley continues. "Not only that, there's strong evidence that investing in your employees' health and well-being benefits your organization in the long run."

In 2006, HERO introduced its HERO Health and Well-being Best Practices Scorecard in Collaboration with Mercer – the HERO Scorecard – to help organizations develop multiyear population health and well-being plans, identify opportunities for improvement and measure progress over time.

"There is a strong connection between brain health, neurological health and mental health and workplace performance. Not only that, there's strong evidence that investing in your employees' health and well-being benefits your organization in the long run."

KAREN MOSELEY
HERO

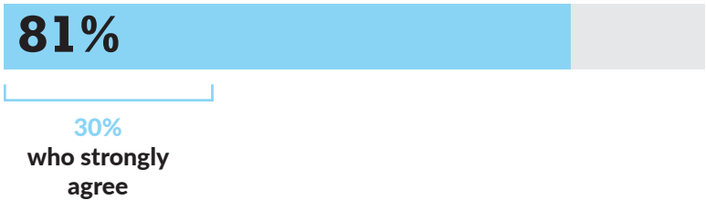
Companies with high scores on the HERO Scorecard performed better in the stock market, a recent study found. Published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, the study reported that stock values for a portfolio of companies that received high scores in a corporate health and wellness self-assessment appreciated by 235% compared with the S&P 500 Index appreciation of 159% over a six-year simulation period. More recently, the organization published a validation study, which identified four areas of practice that predicted the perceived effectiveness of workplace health and well-being initiatives. The strongest predictor? Organizational and leadership support.

"To help companies of all sizes measure their organizational and leadership support and take important strides forward in supporting employee wellness, HERO has made a number of tools and resources available to the public," Moseley offers. "We identify several best practices companies can implement to make employee mental health a priority."

WORKERS VALUE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

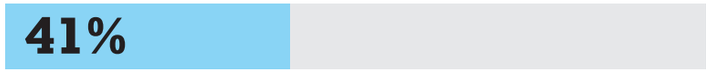
% of workers who believe their employer is more concerned about employees' mental health than they were in the past:

% of workers who agree that how employers support mental health will be an important consideration for them when they look for future work:

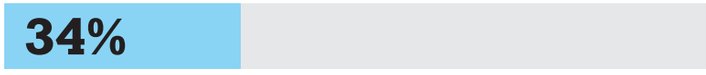


% of workers who want the following mental health supports from their employers:

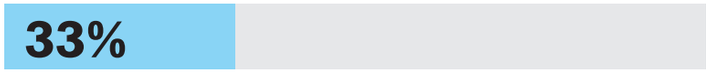
Flexible work hours



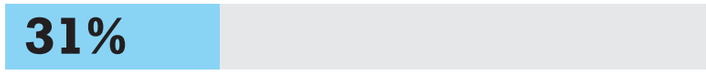
Worklplace culture that respects time off



Ability to work remotely



Four-day work week



© 2022 American Psychological Association

There is no right or wrong way to feel

in response to the trauma of a hurricane.

If you have been impacted by the storm and need someone to talk to, call or text the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or the Disability and Disaster Hotline at 800-626-4959.

988	Help with mental health is also available to anyone, anytime – in English or Spanish – through a call, text or chat to 988. It is free and confidential.
Counseling	Mental health and substance use professionals are available and meeting with patients in shelters.
Opioid treatment	Opioid treatment is available at emergency departments. Call 911 if you are experiencing an emergency. You may also visit Opioid Treatment Programs in your area. Find a real-time map with location, contact information and hours of operation at thecentralregistry.com/map/.
Medication	With some exceptions, pharmacists are allowed to dispense a one-time emergency supply of up to 90 days when they are unable to contact the medical provider, and a one-time emergency refill of up to a 30-day supply of the prescribed medication. Please visit ncbop.org/emergencyoperatingpharmacieshelene.html to locate a pharmacy.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

www.ncdhhs.gov • NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. • 10/2024

GETTY IMAGES

REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK:

Exploring how this new way of working is impacting mental health

BY CAROLINE BARNHILL

In the years following the pandemic, businesses around the nation have considered the impact of remote work on the employee experience – including productivity, work-life balance and overall job satisfaction. One area of particular interest is mental health. Does remote work tend to improve mental health, or worsen it? Multiple studies and surveys have been conducted to explore the mental health implications of working from home. The consensus? As it turns out, there is none.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

For one, the prevalence of remote work is still relatively new. According to a survey published by the U.S. Census Bureau, less than 6% of the American workforce worked primarily from home prior to the pandemic. Although the work-from-home model is much more commonplace in today's world, data about the impact of the model on employee health is limited. Additionally, the data that does exist is inconclusive – showing both positives and negatives to remote work.

"Whether or not remote work is good for you is just too simple of a question," says Tom Zagenczyk, professor of management at the Poole College of Management at NC State. "What's the particular outcome you're looking at? What's your individual situation? It may be efficient to work from home because you don't have to drive to the office, but if you have kids at home, it may not be as productive."

"Employers need to find out as much info as they can from their employees about what they need and develop policies and programs that meet the needs and wants of the majority – and maybe make idiosyncratic deals..."

TOM ZAGENCZYK
Poole College of Management
NC State University

WEIGHING THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

Notably, many remote workers point to the benefits of working from home. According to Buffer's 2023 "State of Remote Work" report, for instance, 91% of respondents reported a positive experience with remote work. Flexibility, they say, is the primary advantage. As for other advantages – 22% of remote workers most appreciate the flexibility in how to spend their time, while 19% most appreciate the flexibility to choose where they live and 13% most appreciate the flexibility to choose their work location.

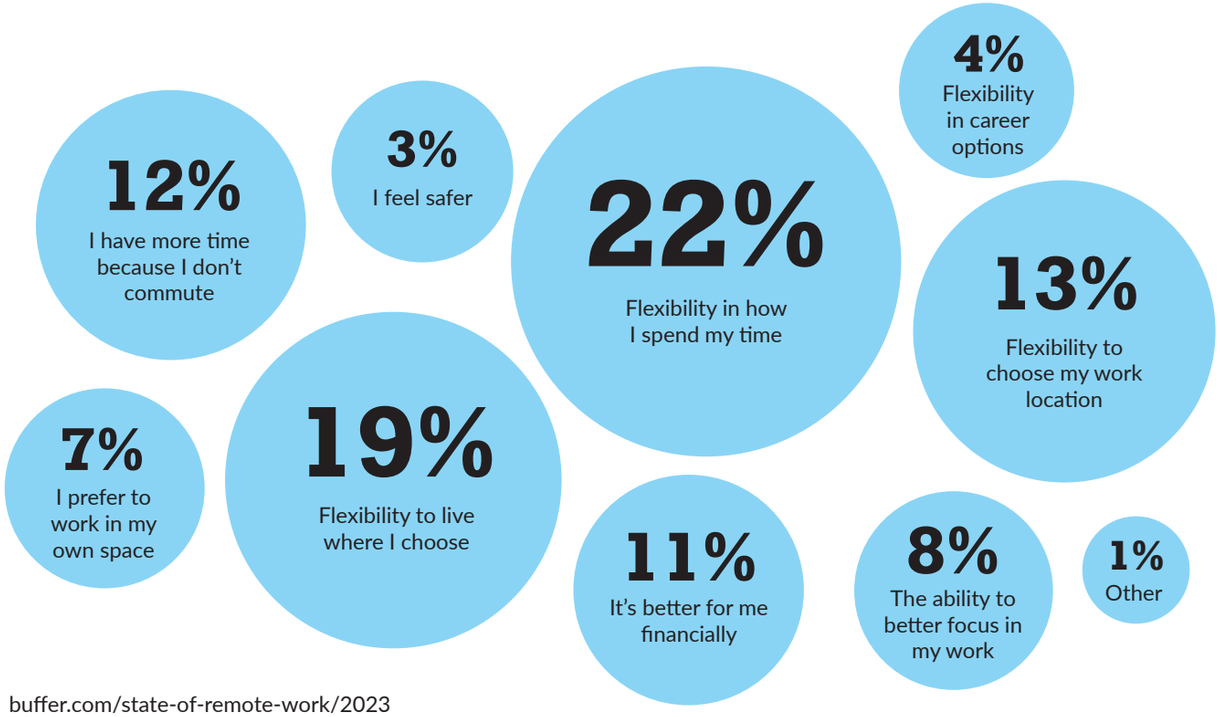
Research also suggests that remote work improves employee satisfaction, allows for a healthier work-life balance and improves employee health. In a 2022 survey, Cisco found that 77.9% of employees believe their overall well-being has improved due to working remotely, with 68.3% pointing to an improvement in mental health. Additionally, 79% of survey respondents believe remote work has improved their work-life balance and 80% said it makes them happier. Workers also believe that remote work will help them manage their mental health through more regular exercise, more time to invest in relationships and more flexibility to prioritize self-care.

On the other hand, remote work also has its drawbacks.

One Canadian study, for example, found that remote workers may struggle more with relaxation and stress than office workers. Additionally, the Buffer report found that remote workers cite staying home too often, experiencing loneliness and struggling to unplug from work as some of their biggest challenges – all of which have significant implications for mental health.

"There's a blurring of boundaries that can occur between work and home when working from home – and there's lots of research on how that loss of boundary has resulted in lower perceived control and may result in

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST BENEFIT OF WORKING REMOTELY?



buffer.com/state-of-remote-work/2023

burnout and poorer mental health," Zagenczyk says.

"Remote and hybrid work also limits interaction with coworkers and supervisors – and these people are an important part of your social support system," he continues. "Having face-to-face conversations doesn't translate as well over Zoom, and it can be difficult for new employees who are trying to learn on the job when the socialization is so different than it was pre-pandemic. How do you pick up things from your day-to-day interactions when you don't have any day-to-day interactions?"

GETTY IMAGES

CREATING CULTURES OF SUPPORT

Despite the complexity of the data about the impact of remote work, one thing is clear: poor mental health is a significant issue for U.S. workers. In Mind Share Partners' 2021 Mental Health at Work Report, 76% of respondents said they have at least one symptom of a mental health condition. Furthermore, 84% of respondents believe their workplace contributed to at least one of their mental health challenges.

It is up to employers, then, to consider how to best support workers – and to discern whether giving workers the flexibility to work remotely may be an effective support. Whatever expectations they have around remote work and office work, however, communicating trust is key.

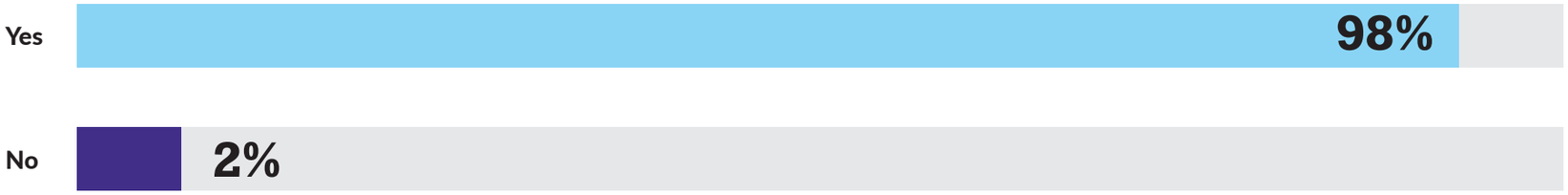
"We don't have a large sample of organizations, but we've heard about employees at big tech companies who were told they could work from home and found that they can be productive doing that – but then got called back into the office and felt like there is a sense of mistrust. Employees grew accustomed to remote work and saw it as a breach of the psychological contract they had with their employers, which caused a lot of disengagement," Zagenczyk says.

All employees want to feel good about themselves and feel a sense of belonging at work, Zagenczyk explains – but their needs may vary depending on their personality, team style, role, industry and lifestyle. Having remote and hybrid work arrangements may communicate to employees that they are valued and cared for by their companies, which can sustain engagement and result in lower levels of burnout, stress and job turnover. However, offering the flexibility to work remotely certainly isn't the only way for employers to foster environments where workers feel supported and trusted.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being, protection from harm, connection and community, work-life harmony, mattering at work and opportunity for growth are the key components of workplace well-being – and whether organizations allow for remote and hybrid arrangements or require employees to work in-office, it is critical for employers to consider how their workplace fosters and protects these five areas.

"Employers need to find out as much info as they can from their employees about what they need and develop policies and programs that meet the needs and wants of the majority – and maybe make idiosyncratic deals, which are voluntary, personalized agreements of a non-standard nature negotiated by individuals with an employer, for those who want something different than the mainstream," Zagenczyk says. "There's just not a one-size-fits-all approach for organizations to deal with this issue."

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK REMOTELY, AT LEAST SOME OF THE TIME, FOR THE REST OF YOUR CAREER?



CREATING A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE:

6 tips employers can use to foster mental wellness among staff

Post-pandemic, American workers continue to experience stress, burnout or anxiety. Employers can play a vital role in creating a culture where employees feel supported, valued, safe and resilient. Dr. Patrick Jeffs, founder of Chapel Hill-based The Resiliency Solution, offers the following actionable tips employers can utilize to support the well-being of their employees.

1. ENCOURAGE BETTER BREAKS AND DOWNTIME

Make sure employees know it's okay to step away from their desks. Encourage small breaks throughout the day to reset and refocus. These short pauses during work reduce the impact of mental fatigue, and focusing on something enjoyable or calming during this time helps the brain switch gears from a high-energy, high-focus state to a relaxed, restorative state.

Tip: Encourage employees to practice a 30-second "attention scan" during their breaks. Have them pause, either indoors or outdoors, and focus on something in their surroundings that catches their eye—whether it's a plant, an interesting object or a view outside. Instruct them to concentrate on that single thing for 10 seconds, noticing its details, colors, or movements. They can repeat this process three times with different objects or scenes to fully reset their mind. This quick, restorative practice helps employees refocus and regain mental clarity throughout the day.

The Science: Micro-breaks, which are short breaks under five minutes, have been scientifically shown to boost focus, reduce stress and enhance cognitive performance. An "attention scan" relates to how our brains process and recover from attention fatigue. Directed attention, like focusing on work tasks, can cause workers to become fatigued, but engaging in effortless attention—where we focus on things that naturally catch our eye—helps restore mental energy.

IN ACTION:

In most half- and full-day trainings conducted by The Resiliency Solution, facilitators run several exercises for participants that demonstrate why it is so difficult, yet important, to take 30-second breaks during busy days. In the debrief of these exercises, work days. A group of North Carolina sheriff leaders and their deputies, as well as newly elected or elevated officials through UNC's Fellows Program, recently participated in one of these trainings.

2. IMPLEMENT "NO-MEETING" DAYS

Help employees recharge by designating certain days as meeting-free so they can focus on deep work without interruptions. No-meeting days encourage flow, and lead to greater creativity and efficiency in completing work. Research has shown that individuals in flow are five times more productive than during a regular workday.

Tip: Schedule one day a week where

PATRICK JEFFS, PHD
The Resiliency Solution

no meetings are allowed, giving people uninterrupted time to focus on complex tasks. Ensure leadership participates, setting the example for the rest of the team.

The Science: Deep work is a state of uninterrupted concentration on cognitively demanding tasks. It's essential for solving complex problems, creativity and producing high-quality work. Meetings often fragment the workday, causing constant context-switching between tasks, which exhausts mental energy. Research by Dr. Gloria Mark from the University of California found that after an interruption, it takes an average of 23 minutes to fully refocus on the original task. By implementing no-meeting days, employees get long, uninterrupted periods to focus deeply on tasks, which is crucial for boosting cognitive performance and allowing for more substantial work to be completed.

3. ENCOURAGE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Building strong relationships at work is essential for mental well-being. Social connections create a sense of belonging and safety, which helps employees feel more supported, increases resilience and reduces stress.

Tip: Offer five to 10 minutes at the beginning of internal office meetings to connect with colleagues on a personal level.

The Science: Studies show that employees with strong social ties are better able to manage workplace challenges and remain more engaged. Positive social interactions release oxytocin, a hormone linked to trust and bonding, which counters the effects of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. Therefore, fostering a connected workplace not only improves mental health but also boosts collaboration and productivity.

IN ACTION:

A number of clinics within Duke Cancer Center start group meetings by sharing a personal or professional "10" (the best part of their week).

4. OFFER MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING & ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Equip managers and employees with the skills to recognize signs of mental distress in themselves and others. This training can include stress

management, emotional intelligence, de-escalation training and how to have conversations about mental health.

Tip: Organize workshops or partner with mental health experts to provide training. Provide easy-to-access mental health tools and resources, such as virtual therapy sessions or wellness apps that support stress management and mindfulness.

The Science: Mental health training boosts awareness and reduces stigma in the workplace, empowering employees to identify early signs of distress. Research indicates that workplaces offering mental health resources and training see improved employee engagement and reduced absenteeism. Building emotional intelligence, through tools like stress management and de-escalation training, enhances interpersonal communication and helps regulate stress responses.

5. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERYONE ON THE TEAM IS IMPORTANT

Foster a culture where each team member feels valued by actively recognizing individual contributions and ensuring everyone has a voice in discussions and decisions.

Tip: During meetings, make space for everyone to share their input by rotating who leads discussions or presents ideas.

The Science: Feeling valued at work is linked to greater psychological safety, which has been shown to increase creativity and collaboration. Neuroscience research demonstrates that recognition activates the brain's reward centers, releasing dopamine, which boosts motivation and engagement. When employees feel like their contributions matter, they are more likely to be resilient and committed to the team's success.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TO BRING YOUR BEST TO THE TEAM

Encourage personal responsibility for wellness by promoting regular self-care practices. When employees prioritize their well-being, they show up more focused and energized for the team.

Tip: Introduce a "well-being check" into performance reviews or one-on-ones, where employees reflect on how they're managing their health and stress levels.

The Science: Studies show that employees who engage in regular self-care practices report lower levels of stress and higher job satisfaction. Self-care activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps reduce cortisol levels and prevent burnout. Encouraging accountability for personal wellness reinforces a culture of well-being, leading to better focus, productivity and overall team performance.

IN ACTION:

Durham-based art company Kalisher listened to the feedback of their leadership, creative and manufacturing teams and, among other things, designated a quiet lunch table. This provided a space for those who wanted to be near others, while also having time to down-regulate at lunch. They said it was a wild success.

FIVE ESSENTIALS FOR WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Centered on the worker voice and equity, these five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each Essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles.

COMPONENTS

Creating a plan with all workers to enact these components can help reimagine workplaces as engines of well-being.

PROTECTION FROM HARM
- Prioritize workplace physical and psychological safety
- Enable adequate rest
- Normalize and support mental health
- Operationalize DEIA* norms, policies, and programs

CONNECTION & COMMUNITY
- Create cultures of inclusion and belonging
- Cultivate trusted relationships
- Foster collaboration and teamwork

WORK-LIFE HARMONY
- Provide more autonomy over how work is done
- Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible
- Increase access to paid leave
- Respect boundaries between work and non-work time

MATTERING AT WORK
- Provide a living wage
- Engage workers in workplace decisions
- Build a culture of gratitude and recognition
- Connect individual work with organizational mission

OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH
- Offer quality training, education, and mentoring
- Foster clear, equitable pathways for career advancement
- Ensure relevant, reciprocal feedback

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility

Office of the U.S. Surgeon General

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS:

How to foster a supportive workplace while honoring privacy

In today's workplace, prioritizing employee mental health is essential for fostering a productive and positive environment. As business owners, navigating this sensitive terrain can be challenging – especially when balancing the need to support a team with the legal responsibilities surrounding privacy and confidentiality.

"While employers may initially have some trepidation addressing mental health in the workplace, most come to realize that the benefits – to both the business and workforce – outweigh the risks," says Tami Simon, J.D.

Named one of the "Top 25 Human Capital Consultants and Leaders of 2023" and one of the "25 Most Influential Women in Employee Benefit Consulting," Simon is a nationally recognized human resource and employee benefits expert. She answers some pressing questions facing business owners when it comes to prioritizing mental health while respecting employees' privacy.

WHAT LAWS DO EMPLOYERS NEED TO COMPLY WITH REGARDING THE PRIVACY OF EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH?

When it comes to health laws, most people immediately think of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). First, it's important to remember who is covered by HIPAA (called "covered entities") and in what circumstances. In the typical employment context, an employer's group health plan is the HIPAA-covered entity – not the employer itself. Therefore, an employer's health plan and all individuals who are exposed to employees' protected health information on behalf of that plan (typically employee benefits professionals in the HR department or their business associates) are required to comply with HIPAA. For example, this might include information about an employee's mental health diagnosis or treatment that is covered by the employer's group insurance program. Individuals outside of that HIPAA "firewall" should never have access to that protected health information. It's vital for all employers to make sure they properly train their staff to understand their obligations under the law.

That said, employers may be subject to other federal and state laws relating to the confidentiality of employees' information, as well as data protection best practices. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or certain state laws that may be more restrictive than federal laws. For instance, if an employee discloses a mental health condition because she is requesting an accommodation to successfully do her job, that information would likely be subject to the ADA. Here too, employers must provide training to ensure their HR staff, managers and leadership understand their obligations to keep information confidential under the ADA. Drug and alcohol testing in the employment context is also an area that may require following specific confidentiality rules.

This is a good time to remember that the confidentiality and privacy rules that apply in the employment context also often require disclosure to employees so they are aware of their rights. These are often contained in employee handbooks, employment policies, privacy notices, summary plan descriptions and other accessible documents provided to and available for employees.

TAMI SIMON, J.D.
Consultant

WHAT INFORMATION CAN EMPLOYERS SHARE AMONG COWORKERS ABOUT AN EMPLOYEE'S MENTAL HEALTH WITHOUT VIOLATING PRIVACY LAWS?

Despite being a simple question, the answer can be complicated. This is because the answer depends on why the employer wants to share the mental health information and in what context the information was received by the employer. That will help determine if the employer can talk about it, with whom and how much can be disclosed.

For example, let's say an employee requests a permitted leave of absence due to a mental health condition from his manager and HR business partner. The manager and HR business partner must generally keep this information confidential. In practice, people beyond the manager and HR business partner may need to be informed, but only the minimum amount of information necessary. For instance, the HR business partner may need to inform the payroll department that the employee will be on a leave of absence and the length of the leave, but the details of the employee's condition should not be disclosed. Similarly, depending on the specific situation, the manager may be able to inform some of the employee's colleagues about the leave to help redistribute work responsibilities. But the manager should not disclose the employee's mental health condition or

treatment. When in doubt, less is more – and always run these fact-specific situations by legal counsel.

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS THEY OFFER, WHILE ALSO ENSURING THAT PARTICIPATION REMAINS VOLUNTARY AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY?

The most effective way to encourage voluntary employee engagement in mental health – and other employee benefit – programs is generally by first having the right culture across the organization and then effective communications. Employee engagement is most successful when the organization has a culture that genuinely supports holistic workforce well-being. This support means, in part, making sure there is no stigma around mental health. And the effort is worth it. Research shows that a strong focus on well-being can significantly improve an employer's financial results due to increased productivity, retention, and reduced healthcare costs. This cultural expectation is most often initially communicated by organizational leadership and then should be reinforced by ongoing internal communications, training and well-being programs. This multi-prong approach helps create consistency.

In terms of communication, regularly reminding employees about available programs is key. For instance, making employees aware of the various resources available through their employee assistance programs (EAPs), health insurance program, business resource groups, community support initiatives, etc. This means communicating more than just during open enrollment and ideally, through several communication channels (e.g., email, posters, internal webinars, business resource groups, intranet sites, in-person educational programs). Make your team members aware of all the programs and benefits available and remind them they won't be stigmatized for utilizing those programs and that their mental health data will be kept confidential as required by law.

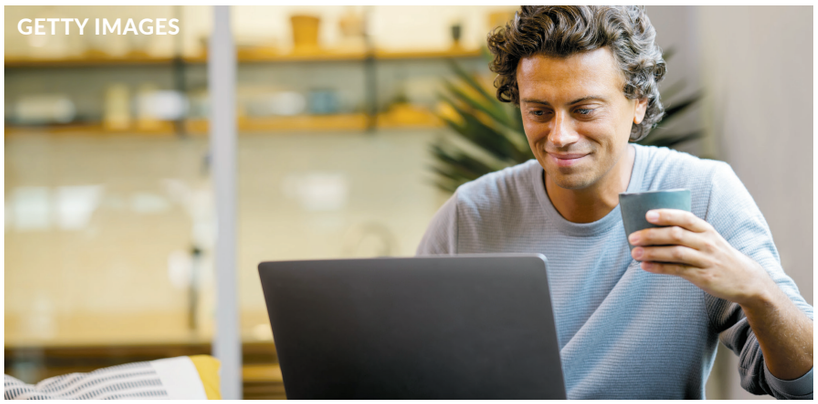
GETTY IMAGES

And remember, an employer is not permitted to discriminate against an employee because of a mental health condition. That includes firing, not hiring or promoting, or forcing the employee to take a leave. The only time employment status can be impacted is when an employer has objective evidence that a person can't perform their job or poses a direct threat to safety (a significant risk of substantial harm to self or others). And since every situation is highly fact-specific, these decisions should be made with legal counsel.

WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD EMPLOYERS FOLLOW WHEN REQUESTING INFORMATION ABOUT AN EMPLOYEE'S MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OR TREATMENT?

Unless there is a legitimate job-related reason why the employer is requesting the information, employers are generally not permitted to ask for detailed mental health information from employees. In some cases, an employer may ask about an employee's mental health if there is a clear indication that it is impacting their ability to perform their job duties or if they pose a safety risk.

IF AN EMPLOYEE DISCLOSES A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE, WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYER'S OBLIGATIONS REGARDING PRIVACY AND SUPPORT?

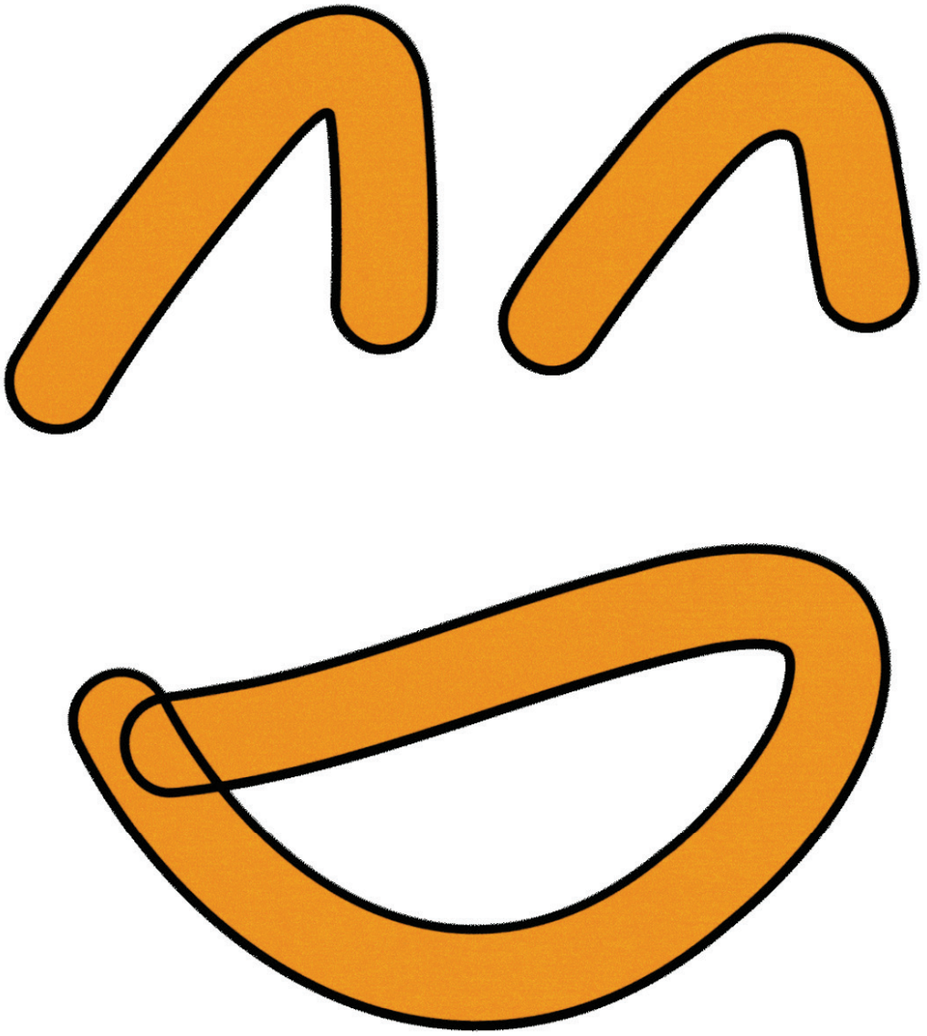

GETTY IMAGES

Why is the employee disclosing the issue? Do they have a question about their benefits? Do they need time off? Do they just want to vent? Are they sharing the information with a manager or a peer? Employers may come across mental health information in different ways, so consider why you're coming across that information and contact experts in that area – like human resources – if you have questions. In general, remember the minimum necessary rule. Make sure your internal policies and procedures are up-to-date. And lastly, the bottom line is that employer should always focus on supporting their workforce while being aware of their obligation to keep information private and secure.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH THAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

Yes. In September, the U.S. Departments of the Treasury, Labor and Health and Human Services released final rules to the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), which is a federal law that generally prevents group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide mental health or substance use disorder benefits from imposing less favorable benefit limitations on those benefits than on medical/surgical benefits. This goes into effect in January of 2025 and demonstrates how mental health is just as important as physical health.

Mental healthcare for teens navigating depression, anxiety, loneliness.



Somethings connects teens with a Certified Peer Specialist Mentor and clinical providers to help every teen feel their best.

Get started today at somethings.com

Somethings Mentorship services are provided by mentors who are trained to offer digital social and emotional support. The services provided by Somethings are not intended to diagnose, treat or cure any mental health or medical conditions. Somethings Mentorship is not a substitute for medical or mental health treatment provided by licensed professionals. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. For 24/7 crisis support call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center, text 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line, or call 988 to reach the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

SPOTTING MENTAL ILLNESS:

Identifying symptoms and knowing when to seek help

Irregular sleep patterns. Trouble concentrating. Mood swings. These are issues most individuals experience at one time or another, but because these signs and symptoms are so common, people can overlook the warning signs of potentially serious mental health issues.

Mental health is an integral aspect of overall well-being, yet it often goes unrecognized until symptoms become severe. Understanding the signs of mental illness and knowing when to seek help can make a significant difference in recovery and overall quality of life.

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness encompasses a wide range of conditions that can affect mood, thinking and behavior. And these issues don't discriminate. Mental health challenges impact people across ages, genders, races, backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), roughly one in every five Americans is currently living with a mental illness. Of those, the three most common diagnoses are anxiety disorders, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

While everyone experiences emotional ups and downs, mental illness typically involves symptoms that interfere with an individual's daily functioning, relationships and overall quality of life.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

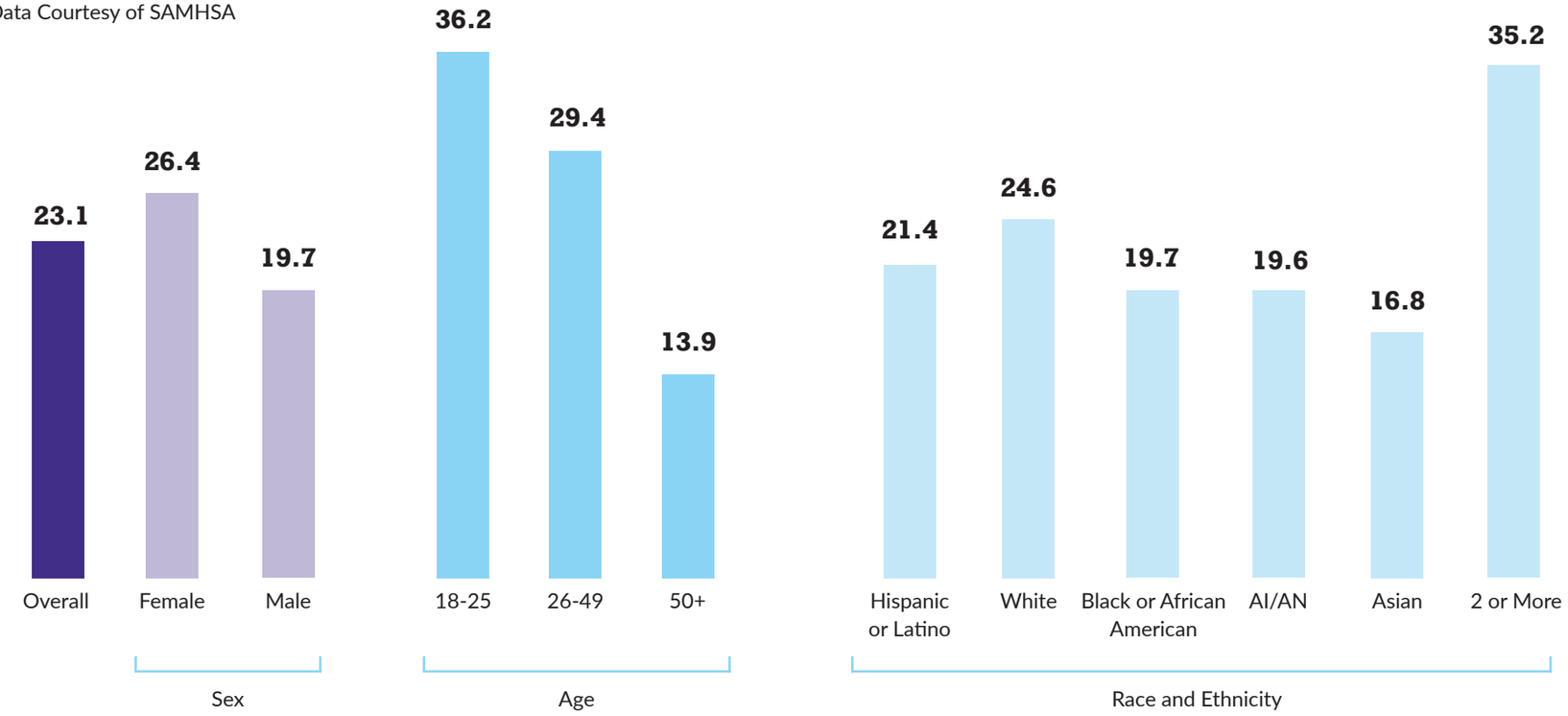
Identifying mental illness early can lead to more effective treatment and

Continued on next page

GETTY IMAGES

PAST YEAR PREVALENCE OF ANY MENTAL ILLNESS AMOUNG U.S. ADULTS (2022)

Data Courtesy of SAMHSA



Continued from previous page

management. According to the NIMH, these are the symptoms often seen in common mental illnesses.

PERSISTENT SADNESS OR IRRITABILITY

Feeling sad, hopeless or irritable for an extended period is one of the most recognizable symptoms of mental illness. This persistent low mood can affect motivation, enjoyment of activities and overall energy levels.

CHANGES IN APPETITE OR WEIGHT

Significant changes in appetite—either increased or decreased—can signal mental health issues. Some individuals may experience weight gain or loss without intending to, often linked to emotional distress.

SIGNIFICANT TIREDNESS, LOW ENERGY OR PROBLEMS SLEEPING

Sleep issues, such as insomnia or oversleeping, are common in many mental health conditions.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

A noticeable decrease in interest in socializing or engaging in previously enjoyed activities can indicate mental health challenges. Isolation can further exacerbate feelings of loneliness and despair.

CONFUSED THINKING OR REDUCED ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE

Struggling to focus, make decisions or remember things can be symptoms of various mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression. These issues can affect work, school and personal life.

EXCESSIVE WORRY OR ANXIETY

While everyone experiences worry, excessive or uncontrollable anxiety that interferes with daily life may be a sign of an anxiety disorder. Symptoms can include restlessness, rapid heartbeat and difficulty relaxing.

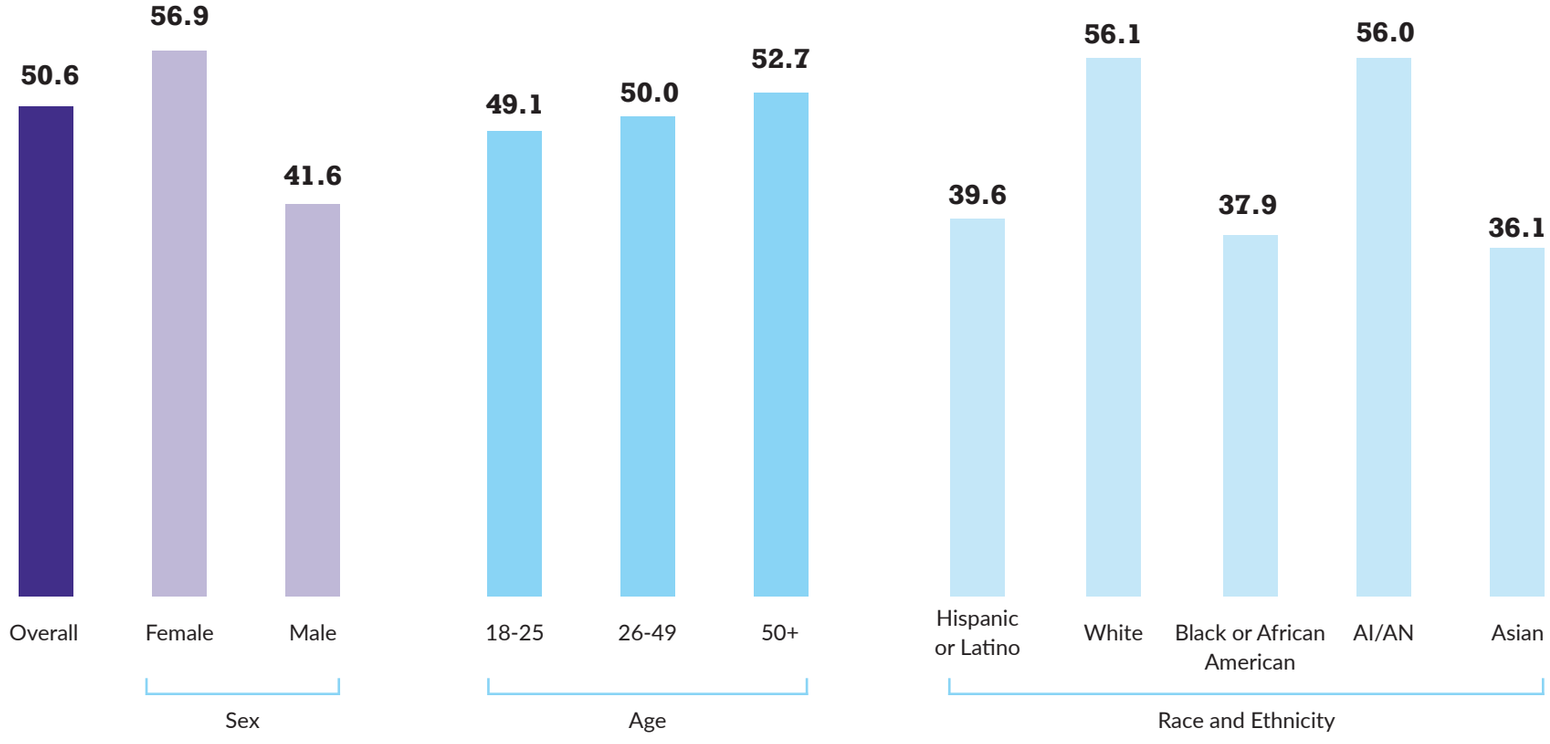
GETTY IMAGES

MOOD SWINGS

Frequent and intense mood swings that disrupt daily life can indicate

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT RECEIVED IN PAST YEAR AMONG U.S. ADULTS WITH ANY MENTAL ILLNESS (2022)

Data Courtesy of SAMHSA



"Employers need to find out as much info as they can from their employees about what they need and develop policies and programs that meet the needs and wants of the majority..."

DR. MEHUL MANKAD
Duke University

a mood disorder. This may include periods of extreme elation followed by deep depression, commonly seen in bipolar disorder.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Many individuals with mental health issues also have problems with alcohol or drug use and this can make identification and treatment more challenging. Sometimes those with mental health conditions turn to alcohol and/or drugs to self-medicate, leading to worsening problems. Because of the frequent co-occurence of mental health and substance use issues, workplace interventions and programs to prevent, identify or treat should consider both conditions..

FEELINGS OF GUILT OR SHAME

Excessive feelings of guilt or shame, especially when they seem disproportionate to the situation, can indicate a mental health condition, particularly depression or anxiety disorders.

THOUGHTS OF SELF-HARM OR SUICIDE

Thoughts of self-harm or suicide are serious symptoms that require immediate attention. If you or someone you know is experiencing these thoughts, seek help immediately. Call or text 988 for the national Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

KNOWING WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT

While it's helpful to understand the symptoms, many individuals struggle with knowing when it is time to get help.

"It might sound almost too simplistic, but a good way to tell when it's time to seek help is when the issue starts to bother you and impacts your ability to function," says Dr. Mehul Mankad, adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry at Duke University. "For example, if you're going through a breakup and having some crying spells and maybe having trouble sleeping, but you're still waking up to go exercise and can focus at work, there's a good chance it's a temporary issue that you'll be able to work through. But if you're going through a breakup, and you're not eating, you're socially isolating yourself from friends, and are regularly calling out sick from work – those suggest a loss of function and it's likely time to seek help. Talk to a primary care provider, go to your EAP (employee assistance program) or access other mental health resources."

But what about recognizing when to seek help for those around you who seem to be struggling? These situations are often challenging, Mankad says, because many of us feel awkward asking questions and are worried we won't know what to do next.

Mankad offers the following approach: ask a question based on an observation and then listen.

"If you notice a coworker struggling and maybe see them shed a tear in the workroom, you can gently pull them aside and say, 'I thought I may have seen you crying – I just wanted to check in and see how you're doing,' and then pause and see if they're willing to communicate with you," Mankad says. "If they are willing to talk, take time to listen and provide support or direction to available resources."

However, if they want to maintain their privacy, that's their right. "In those situations, you can tell them that you respect their privacy but that you're available to talk if they change their mind," he says.

Regardless of the situation, Mankad advises individuals to pay attention to any language that points to an individual having thoughts of harm to themselves or others.

"Your gut is a good indicator – if something feels concerning to you, that's when you should reach out to a supervisor, your human resources department or another resource to guide you so that you don't have to worry alone."

DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEED HELP WITH A CRISIS?

1. Call 911 if this is a life-threatening emergency. If you need police, ask for a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) Officer, they have received specialized training for responding to individuals experiencing a behavioral health, substance use or developmental disability crisis.
2. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis call or text 988 or chat at www.988lifeline.org for a trained crisis counselor 24/7. To reach a Spanish-speaking crisis counselor, call or text 988 and press option 2, text "AYUDA" to 988, or chat online at 988lineadevida.org.
3. If you have any further questions regarding Crisis Services within NC, please contact 984-236-5300 or 800-662-7030 for Spanish. For additional resources to assist you with a crisis immediately, visit crisissolutionsnc.org and select your county from the drop-down box.

DEBUNKING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMAS

While mental health conditions are common, affecting millions of individuals worldwide, there is still a strong stigma around mental health. To combat the misinformation, we counter some of the most common stereotypes surrounding mental health.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE A SIGN OF PERSONAL WEAKNESS

According to a 2023 study co-led by researchers at Harvard Medical School and the University of Queensland, one in two people worldwide will develop a mental health disorder in their lifetime. This widespread prevalence alone indicates that mental health challenges are not limited to "weak" individuals.

Many mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, have a genetic component. Studies show that individuals with a family history of mental illness are at higher risk, indicating that these conditions are not merely a result of personal choice or weakness. Additionally, conditions like depression and bipolar disorder are linked to chemical imbalances in the brain. For example, serotonin and dopamine play crucial roles in mood regulation, showing that mental health issues often have physiological bases.

PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE DANGEROUS

Television and movies often portray individuals with mental health conditions as violent or unstable, which can lead to skewed perceptions. Studies show that sensationalized media coverage contributes significantly to the stigma surrounding mental illness. However, if you look at the research, the vast majority of individuals with mental health issues are not violent. In fact, only a small percentage of violent acts can be attributed to serious mental illness. Research from Duke University shows it is more likely that someone with mental health conditions would be a victim of a violent act rather than a perpetrator. However, research continues to show that when people with serious mental illness commit violent or aggressive acts, other factors are frequently at play. The co-occurring issue of substance misuse, for example, is a significant risk factor for violence.

PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE LAZY AND LACK MOTIVATION

This one is a bit more nuanced, agrees Dr. Mehul Mankad, adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry at Duke University. Many mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and ADHD, can severely impact energy levels and motivation. For example, depression can cause fatigue and ADHD can affect cognitive functions like concentration and executive functioning.

"The challenge is that it's hard to compare your insides with someone else's outsides," Mankad says. "As individuals, we have a good sense of how we're doing and our personal expectations – so, naturally, we like to transpose those same expectations on others. For example, if I can work this way, within this much time while setting this productivity goal, then I think you should, too. So if you're not getting what you expect from a coworker or employee, instead of jumping to conclusions, it may be helpful to ask, 'This is what I thought you were going to do for this project – why did it turn out differently?"

"While that, itself, doesn't get to the mental health question, it could lead to asking them how they are doing and giving them permission to talk about why or how things turned out differently than what others were expecting. We won't know the 'why' until we ask the question and then listen in a nonjudgmental way," he continues.

ONLY CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Studies indicate that mental health issues can arise from a complex interplay of genetic, biological, environmental and social factors – and that these factors are not limited to specific groups but can affect anyone. Stigma surrounding mental health can lead individuals to believe that mental health issues are limited to "certain types" of people, which may prevent individuals from seeking help. Research from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) highlights that many people do not seek treatment due to fear of being judged or misunderstood.

There are also cultural differences, which can influence both how individuals perceive their own mental health struggles and their approaches to treating them.

THERAPY IS ONLY FOR SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Therapy is beneficial not just for severe mental health disorders but also for everyday challenges like stress, anxiety, relationship issues, life transitions and personal growth. Many individuals seek therapy for reasons such as improving communication skills, managing work stress or navigating grief. The growing recognition of mental health awareness has led to a shift in how therapy is perceived. Increasingly, people understand that seeking therapy is a sign of strength and self-care, not just a response to severe distress.

Online therapy, post-pandemic, continues to boom. RAND Corp. reported that spending on mental health services increased 53% from March 2020 to August 2022. Why? Many experts point to increased accessibility. Individuals who desired therapy but lived in rural areas, lacked transportation or had childcare constraints struggled with finding the time and resources to make an in-person appointment. Today, more than half of therapy sessions today are conducted online or over the phone.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES CAN BE OVERCOME BY WILLPOWER AND OR POSITIVE THINKING

Mental health issues are complex – and often involve biological, genetic, environmental and a host of other factors. Others have deep-rooted psychological components that require professional intervention like therapy or medication. Simply "thinking positively" without addressing the underlying issues can lead to frustration. Toxic positivity can create a culture where individuals feel pressured to hide their pain rather than seek help.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE JUST PHASES THAT PEOPLE GROW OUT OF

Sometimes, but not always. Many mental health conditions stem from a combination of genetic, biological, environmental and psychological factors – meaning they are not temporary issues. However, life changes, stressors or trauma can trigger or exacerbate mental health issues. The best predictor of the future is the past, says Mankad. "If you have a relationship with someone comfortable sharing their struggles with you, it's useful to know the ups and downs of their past. Some individuals have periods where they struggle but then bounce back, while others have more chronic problems that are a daily issue. The fact is, we don't know until we ask."

GET THE SCOOP ON MANAGING STRESS

It's important to make sure you are taking care of your mental health. Behavioral health is core to our overall health. More than 3 million people across North Carolina have mental health or substance use disorders. There are actions you can take, and resources available, to help maintain your mental health. Specific steps you can regularly take to improve and maintain your mental wellbeing are below.

S	**Stay connected to family and friends.**	Social connections build resiliency.
C	**Compassion for yourself and others.**	Self-compassion decreases trauma symptoms and stress.
O	**Observe your use of substances.**	Early intervention can prevent problems.
O	**Ok to ask for help.**	Struggling is normal. Asking for help is empowering.
P	**Physical activity to improve your mood.**	Exercise boosts mood and lowers anxiety.

988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE. CALL OR TEXT 24/7.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

www.ncdhhs.gov • NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. • 7/2023

GETTY IMAGES

SEASONAL SELF CARE

While the holiday season is often viewed as a time for joy and celebration, the reality is for many American workers, it is also a time of heightened stress. The demands of year-end deadlines, holiday preparations and social obligations can create added pressure that threatens mental well-being.

According to a Monster.com survey, 61% of U.S. workers say the holidays negatively impact their mental health, with 44% feeling more stressed and 17% reporting a decline in their overall well-being.

To navigate this busy period more effectively, both individuals and organizations have the opportunity to prioritize mental health. And it doesn't need to be complicated, says Victoria Soltis-Jarrett, Ph.D., Carol Morde Ross Distinguished Professor of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing and family psychiatric nurse practitioner at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"We don't want to overwhelm people when we talk about mental health – but rather share resources and self-care practices that are easily accessible and simple to incorporate into your life," she says. "There are dozens of tips and suggestions that individuals can utilize to combat stress over the holidays. Choosing even one or two that work best for you can be immensely beneficial."

VICTORIA SOLTIS-JARRETT, PHD
UNC Chapel Hill

The holidays are also a great time for individuals to do a gentle check-in regarding their use of alcohol or other substances, which can have a powerful effect on mental health.

"The first step is to identify that there is a problem and acknowledge it," Soltis-Jarrett says. "Are people asking you if you are okay? Do you feel that your life is not worth living? Have you noticed changes in your sleep, appetite or mood? Has it lasted for more than three days and worsened? Those are all good baseline questions to ask yourself – and then to seek help."

Individuals can call or text 988 or chat online to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides 24-hour, confidential support to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services offers five simple tips to help individuals manage stress.

CUT OUT AND SAVE FOR YOUR REFERENCE!

SIMPLE WAYS TO PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS

For Employees	For Employers
Set Boundaries Establishing clear work hours and personal time is critical for maintaining mental health and well-being. Define your availability and communicate these boundaries with your team to help manage expectations and reduce the pressure to be constantly "on."	**Encourage Open Communication** Fostering a culture where employees feel comfortable discussing mental health is essential. Encourage dialogue about stress levels and mental well-being, normalizing these conversations within your team.
Practice Self-Care Prioritize the activities that help you recharge – whether that means taking a walk around the block, practicing yoga, journaling or participating in your favorite hobby.	**Promote Work-Life Balance** Actively encourage employees to take time off and respect their boundaries during the holiday season. Highlight the importance of disconnecting from work to spend time with family and friends.
Manage Your Schedule Utilize a planner or digital calendar to keep track of both work tasks and personal commitments. For work and personal projects, try to break tasks into smaller, manageable chunks.	**Provide Resources** Make mental health resources readily available to your team. Ensuring that employees know where to turn for help can make a significant difference in their well-being.
Take Breaks Schedule short breaks throughout your day to step away from your desk. A few minutes of stretching, grabbing a snack or simply sitting quietly can help clear your mind and boost your productivity.	**Plan Team Activities** Organize low-pressure team-building activities that promote connection without adding to stress. Holiday potlucks, volunteer opportunities or informal gatherings can foster camaraderie and provide a welcome break from work responsibilities.
Stay Connected Feeling stressed? Reach out to colleagues, friends or family for support. Sharing your feelings and experiences can be incredibly validating and may provide new perspectives on how to handle stress.	**Recognize Achievements** Acknowledging employee efforts and accomplishments can boost morale, especially during a busy time. Take a moment to celebrate both individual and team successes, fostering a sense of appreciation and motivation.
Practice Mindfulness Incorporating mindfulness practices into your daily routine can significantly reduce stress and anxiety. Simple techniques like deep breathing, guided imagery or short meditations can help center your thoughts and bring a sense of calm.	**Encourage Breaks** Regularly remind employees to take breaks and disconnect from work. Encourage them to step away from their desks to recharge, especially during peak stress periods.
Know Your Triggers Identifying specific stressors can empower you to manage your reactions. Recognize what tends to overwhelm you during the holidays and identify strategies to cope with those triggers.	**Lead by Example** As a leader, you play a critical role in modeling healthy work-life balance and self-care practices. Your behavior sets the tone for your team. By prioritizing your mental health, you encourage others to do the same.
Go Outside Seasonal Affective Disorders are prevalent this time of year. Light is needed at the beginning and the end of the day to offset depressive symptoms. Head outside at least once per day to soak up the Vitamin D and give your brain time to register that it is light outside. You can even use a lightbox to reset your circadian rhythm.	**Be Mindful of Workloads** Assess workloads to ensure they are manageable during the holiday season. Be proactive in redistributing tasks if necessary, helping to prevent burnout and promote a healthier work environment.

BRING MENTAL HEALTH INTO FOCUS

Organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness help businesses better address mental health in the workplace

The 2024 "Workplace Mental Health Poll" conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) underscores the importance of creating a culture that supports the mental health and well-being of employees, but 70 percent of senior-level managers reported they have not received training for how to talk with their teams about mental health.

Additionally, most full-time workers (58 percent) are not comfortable discussing their own mental health. Those are eye-opening numbers given that one in five U.S. adults experiences mental illness and one in 20 experiences serious mental illness.

"There's a business case for creating healthy cultures where mental health is valued and people are encouraged to talk about it," said Mark Simon, executive director of NAMI Wake County. He cites increased productivity, improved morale and reductions in health care costs, burnout and absenteeism when mental health is openly discussed and supported. Failure to do so hits the bottom line: Earnings lost due to serious mental illness equate to $193 billion annually, according to NAMI.

From his own personal experience, Simon brings a multidimensional understanding to the conversation around mental health in the workplace. Across the decade he spent working in finance at large corporations, he went from hiding his own mental health challenges to openly disclosing his struggles with bipolar disorder.

"Having a serious mental illness like bipolar disorder is a lifelong challenge.

Now I consider myself to be in an advanced stage of recovery that's managed with medication and therapy, but I still have mood swings," he said.

Diagnosed at age 13, Simon's college years included two hospitalizations and were followed by increased mood disturbances when he entered the corporate workforce.

"I was very concerned about stigma at that stage of my life so I didn't disclose my mental health to my employer, the only people who knew about my bipolar disorder were my immediate family and close friends," said Simon. He moved from his first job at KPMG to a pharmaceutical company, still in accounting and still keeping his invisible disability hidden. But in his third job, as an asset analyst at General Electric (NYSE: GE), he found a corporate home that supported inclusion and mental wellness in the workplace.

"I'm a gay Latino with a mental health condition, so I was able to lean into those intersecting identities," said Simon, who joined the LGBTQ affinity group at GE, marking the first time he came out gay in the workplace.

"Sexual orientation is less stigmatized than mental illness," he said, so he still wasn't talking publicly about his mental health. But when GE hosted a "global day of caring," co-workers

who knew him personally asked Simon to speak about disabilities in the workplace.

"In a live interview with GE's divisional CEO, I named the condition, named the medications I take, and talked about how bipolar disorder affects me in the workplace and that I was able to navigate [work] by having open conversations with my manager. This was a huge leap to go from not talking about it to sharing my story with 300,000 employees," he said.

A defining moment that not only initiated the broader conversation of mental health in the workplace at GE but also helped Simon feel more comfortable dealing with his mental health challenges openly, which he continued to do when he moved into a senior financial analyst position at Gap Inc.

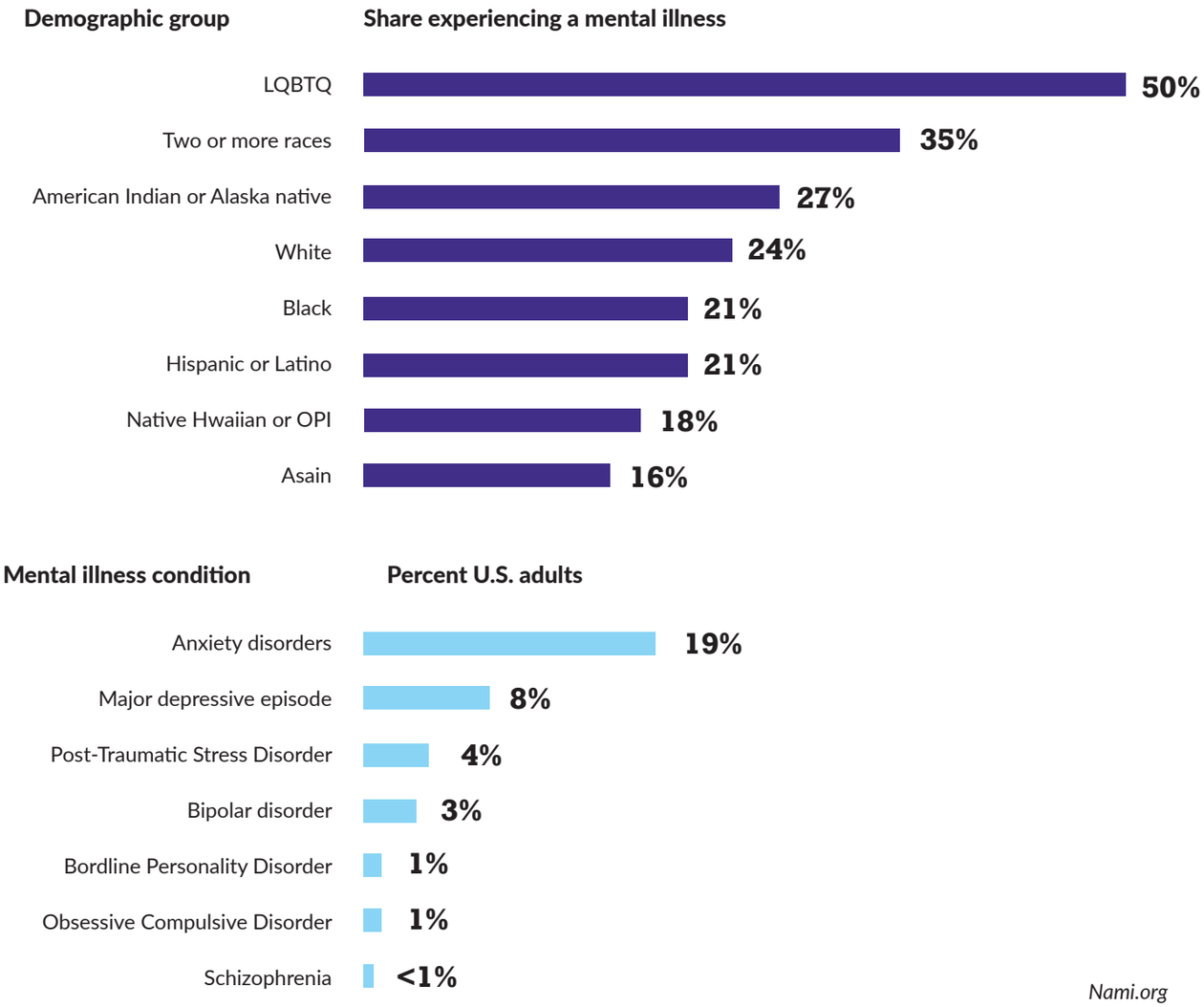
The job entailed managing a $94 million budget and developing forecast models for inbound logistics within Gap's global supply chain, but the work he grew to love was envisioning and leading a cross-functional team that addressed culture transformation and mental health in the workplace. Ultimately, he traded his career in corporate accounting for one that focuses on workplace mental health. Now, he's poised to bring the resources of NAMI, along with his own experiences and professional alignments across mental health organizations, to Triangle businesses.

"Work is considered a social determinant of health – having stable employment, having autonomy and responsibility in the workplace. It's difficult when someone can't work and not working makes their mental health worse," Simon said. "Anything NAMI and businesses can do to help people maintain employment is helpful to a person's recovery and their mental health."

Two key resources available to businesses are NAMI's StigmaFree Workplace program and a certificate program in Total Worker Health offered through the Gillings School of Global Public Health.

TIPPING POINT

Less than half of the U.S. adults with mental illness (47%) received treatment in 2021 and, on average, there's an 11-year delay between the onse of mental illness symptoms and treatments.



Nami.org

Darcy Gruttadaro, NAMI's Chief Innovation Officer, said they address "the full continuum of mental health conditions, which impact all walks of life – these are not conditions that discriminate on the basis of socioeconomic status or demographics, and employers are at risk of losing strong performers."

NAMI has 650 affiliate organizations across the country, including three in the Triangle – NAMI Wake County, NAMI Orange and NAMI Durham – and the organization provides resources and technical assistance to local businesses.

"You can do a great job of eradicating stigma and raising awareness, but if you don't make sure people know how to access mental health care then you've undermined all the good work that's been done," Gruttadaro said.

The Total Worker Health certificate at UNC-Chapel Hill is open to "any manager or person interested in changing the workplace culture to support health and well-being," said Laura Linnan, senior associate dean at the Gillings School of Global Public Health and director of The Carolina Center for Healthy Work Design and Worker Well-Being. "The focus is often on stress because work suffers when employees feel stress, but our Total Worker Health program also focuses on workplace conditions that make it more or less difficult to have good mental health – like the pace of work, interactions with supervisors, things of that nature that impact both the employees' well-being and how business is or is not productive."

NCDHHS

Crisis Services

Do you or someone you know need help with a crisis?

Call 911 if this a life-threatening emergency. If you need police, ask for a ***CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) Officer***, they have received specialized training for responding to individuals experiencing a behavioral health, substance use or developmental disability crisis.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, **call or text 988** or chat at **www.988lifeline**.org for a trained crisis counselor 24/7. To reach a Spanish-speaking crisis counselors, **call or text 988** and press **option 2**, text **"AYUDA" to 988**, or chat online at **Linea988.org.**

If you have any further questions regarding Crisis Services within NC, please contact 984-236-5300, or 800-662-7030 for Spanish. For additional resources to assist you with a crisis immediately, visit www.crisissolutionsnc.org and select your county from the drop-down box.

Customer Service Center:
1-800-662-7030
Visit www.relaync.com/tty for information about TTY services.

Visit us online: