

Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheet



This document is part of a set of fact sheets that employers can use to begin, restart, or enhance initiatives to promote a culture of well-being at the workplace. Each fact sheet focuses on one of the six areas of workplace well-being: physical, emotional, social, community, financial, and career.

What is emotional well-being?

Emotional well-being refers to a state of positive psychological functioning that enables an individual to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life.¹ Individuals with high emotional well-being are resilient—they can bounce back from adversity and stress. Low emotional well-being can put an employee at risk for substance abuse or mental illness (depression, anxiety disorder, etc.), as well as other physical health issues.

Why is emotional well-being important to an employer?

- Lower stress = lower health care costs. Employees who report low levels of stress have 46% lower health care expenditures than those who report high levels of stress.²
- 57% of employees say they would be more loyal, more productive, and take less time off work if their employer proactively supported workforce mental health.³
- Workplace stress costs employers \$300 billion per year. 83% of workers feel stress on the job.⁴

Why is emotional well-being important to an employee?

- Emotional well-being allows individuals to cope with difficult situations and maintain a positive outlook to meet the demands of everyday life.
- Employees who feel they are in a supportive work environment, where co-workers can express compassion and caring for one another, report higher levels of satisfaction and teamwork.⁶
- Research has shown the following health benefits related to emotional well-being:
 - > Optimism can improve cardiovascular health.⁶ Gratitude can improve sleep quality and boost the immune system.⁷
 - > Self-compassion may increase a person's likelihood of taking a proactive approach to health (e.g., seeking medical attention sooner when experiencing symptoms).⁸
 - > Resilience can lower chronic pain⁹ and helps individuals cope with work demands.

“Though emotional well-being was gaining visibility in the employer well-being space prior to the coronavirus pandemic, it is now a health, safety and talent issue.”⁵

What can employers do to help promote emotional well-being in the workplace?

The most common emotional well-being programs that employers offer in the workplace are stress management, resiliency training, and mindfulness classes.¹⁰ Digital applications for mindfulness, meditation, and therapy are growing in popularity and can provide significant help.¹¹ Consider the ideas below when tailoring emotional well-being programs to company culture and employee preferences.²

Short-term strategies:

- **Ask health plan providers, including Kaiser Permanente, about available resources.** Kaiser Permanente offers several emotional well-being solutions, including:
 - > **Self-care apps** for meditation, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioral therapy, like myStrength and Calm.
 - > On-site education health classes, **mental health in the workplace** articles, **Find Your Words**, virtual and onsite mental health trainings, and **resources for self-care for yourself and your employees**.
 - > Toolkits to help improve sleep habits (**Rest and Revive**) and manage stress (**Finding Balance**).
 - > Other **self-care resources** such as personalized online programs, support groups, and wellness coaching by phone that help manage depression, reduce stress, and improve sleep.

Long-term strategies:

- **Use a four-step process¹² to establish a psychologically healthy workforce that fosters employee emotional well-being and enhances organizational performance:**
 - 1 Know the impact**
 - > Leverage data to understand the impact mental health has on your workforce from a productivity, cost, and employee-engagement perspective. Use formal (HR questions and forms and Employee Assistance program utilization) and informal (manager check-ins with employees, pre-questions solicited during town halls, feedback from wellness champions, etc.) data gathering to understand how your workforce is doing.
 - 2 Break the silence**
 - > Make sure work policies are in place that promote safety and respect for all employees. Train the workforce to identify emotional distress symptoms in other employees and refer those in need to EAP and/or other emotional well-being resources. Offer guidance and resources to support managers and staff.
 - 3 Deliver robust care options**
 - > Provide self-care offerings (e.g., assessments, meditation/mindfulness tools), Employee Assistance Programs (e.g., solution focused counseling, critical incident response), and specialty care for substance abuse disorders and mental health conditions.
 - 4 Build a culture of well-being**
 - > Create a work culture where it is OK to talk about stress and other emotional issues. Promote work/life balance, including adequate vacation time and flexibility. Ensure active engagement from managers and leadership.



Monitor your progress using this **Kaiser Permanente scoresheet**

Sources

- ¹ Croft, H. Healthy Place. What Is Emotional Health? And How to Improve It? <https://www.healthyplace.com/other-info/mental-illness-overview/what-is-emotional-health-and-how-to-improve-it/>
- ² Goetzel, RZ, Anderson, DR, Whitmer, RW, et al. The Relationship Between Modifiable Health Risks and Health Care Expenditures: An Analysis of the Multi-Employer HERO Health Risk and Cost Database. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*: 1998; 40(10): 843-54.
- ³ Health Shield Insights Twitter Poll, July 2018.
- ⁴ "Workplace Stress," The American Institute of Stress, stress.org/workplace-stress, accessed May 30, 2019, & April 17, 2020.
- ⁵ *Working Well – 2021 Global Wellbeing Survey*, AON, 2021.
- ⁶ Rozanski, R, et al., Association of Optimism with Cardiovascular Events and All-Cause Mortality: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis, *JAMA Network*, September 2019. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2752100>
- ⁷ Allen, S. "[Gratitude can improve sleep quality](#)," Greater Good, Science Center UC Berkeley, March 2018.
- ⁸ Homan, KJ, & Sirois, FM (2017). Self-compassion and physical health: Exploring the roles of perceived stress and health-promoting behaviors. *Health psychology open*, 4(2), 2055102917729542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102917729542>
- ⁹ Ramírez-Maestre, C, de la Vega, R, Sturgeon, JA, & Peters, M (2019). Editorial: Resilience Resources in Chronic Pain Patients: The Path to Adaptation. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 2848. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02848>
- ¹⁰ National Alliance on Mental Illness-NYC Metro (NAMI-NYC), Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH), Partnership for Workplace Mental Health/American Psychiatric Association Foundation, PricewaterhouseCoopers, The Kennedy Forum. *The Working Well Toolkit: Leading a Mentally Healthy Business*. June 2016.
- ¹¹ "How Kaiser Permanente Created a Mental Health and Wellness Digital Ecosystem" *NEJM Catalyst Innovations in Care Delivery* 2020; 01 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1056/CAT.20.029511>
- ¹² "[Working Well Toolkit: Leading a Mentally Healthy Business](#)," Northeast Business Group on Health, August 2016.