

Social 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 social well-being?

Social well-being refers to the existence of close relationships and social connections in a person's life. Research shows that social connections influence our habits, behaviors, and health.¹

Why is social well-being important to an employer?

- People who have at least three or four very close relationships are healthier, have higher well-being, and are more engaged in their jobs.¹
- Employees spend less time second-guessing their co-workers' motives and intentions and more time having transparent conversations that lead to high productivity.¹
- Research also indicates that those with positive relationships recover more quickly from surgeries and injuries, allowing employees to return to work sooner.¹
- People adopt well-being behaviors more quickly through peer groups. For example, thriving individuals are 20% more likely to have thriving team members.¹
- When employees have strong personal connections to their co-workers, they may feel more connected to the organization and feel invested in the collective performance of the group.

Why is social well-being important to an employee?

- Data suggests having close personal relationships is good for physiological health.¹
- Direct and frequent contact with someone else who has high well-being increases the likelihood that an individual will be happy.¹
- One study showed that participants over the age of 50 who were socially engaged had memory decline at less than half the rate of those who scored low on the social engagement indicator.³

What can employers do to help promote social well-being at the workplace?

The best way to promote social well-being is to incorporate it into the organizational culture. Jim Harter, chief scientist for Gallup's Workplace Management and Wellbeing Practices, states, "Every meeting should have laughter." Whether it's in the office or on a conference call, "it builds, it stretches beyond the meeting, because you've got people you can trust more if you laugh with somebody. You know that you're part of a team, and that's what's important."²

Consider some of the following ideas:

- **Encourage opportunities to connect**
 - > **Encourage team building.** Effective team building activities are excellent for cultivating a sense of unity and camaraderie among employees.⁶
 - > **Promote volunteering in the community with teams of co-workers.** Time away from the office spent volunteering with co-workers can positively impact social well-being, productivity, company image, and employee morale.
- **Promote self-care among employees**
 - > **Direct them to resources.** Work with your health plan and other providers to provide articles, audio, videos, and apps that help individuals create strategies for navigating life's challenges.
 - > **Model well-being behaviors.** Take micro-breaks and make only some meetings video-based.⁴
 - > **Acknowledge loneliness.** Encourage employees to reach out when they need help, and provide **recommendations** on how to cope with loneliness.⁷
- **Create a virtual community, when physically distant**
 - > **Continue to use technology to stay connected.** Online meetings can help boost team relationships because employees have the opportunity to be vulnerable (introducing their homes, pets, and children) and see their leaders in a more authentic home setting.⁵
 - > **Open lines of communication between managers and staff.** Open team meetings with an icebreaker. Schedule virtual drop-in office hours. Participate and ask questions during virtual meetings. Call or email co-workers to express gratitude.
 - > **Encourage connectedness.** Promote and model the following ideas: having a virtual coffee hour with a co-worker, volunteering to host a virtual 15-minute stretch break and hosting a virtual walking meeting/check-in.
- **Provide physical space, when appropriate, for social interaction**
 - > **Create a social space.** A workplace that promotes social well-being has easily accessible common areas for employees to take coffee breaks or take a moment to decompress with co-workers.⁶
 - > **Use the outdoor space around your office.** If space is hard to come by in the office, go outside and find some space outdoors to connect.
- **Onboard management and engage employees**
 - > **Ensure that management understands the importance of social interaction.** Managers who care about social well-being allow for and promote social interaction among their teams.
 - > **Include socializing in your onboarding program.** Successful onboarding should lead to friendships and partnerships, providing insight into who new employees can rely on. Build some in-person time during onboarding—trust develops quicker in person.¹
 - > **Ask your employees about existing and potential opportunities for social interaction.** Incorporate questions into annual employee surveys about how people perceive their social well-being opportunities at the workplace.



Explore what experts know about how social connections increase productivity and creativity by reading **The Power and Potential of Social Networks** and **other articles** on social well-being in Gallup's online Business Journal.

Sources

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