

Championing Women's Wellness in the Workplace

How to recognize the needs of women employees and be an ally for their total health



Thriving together

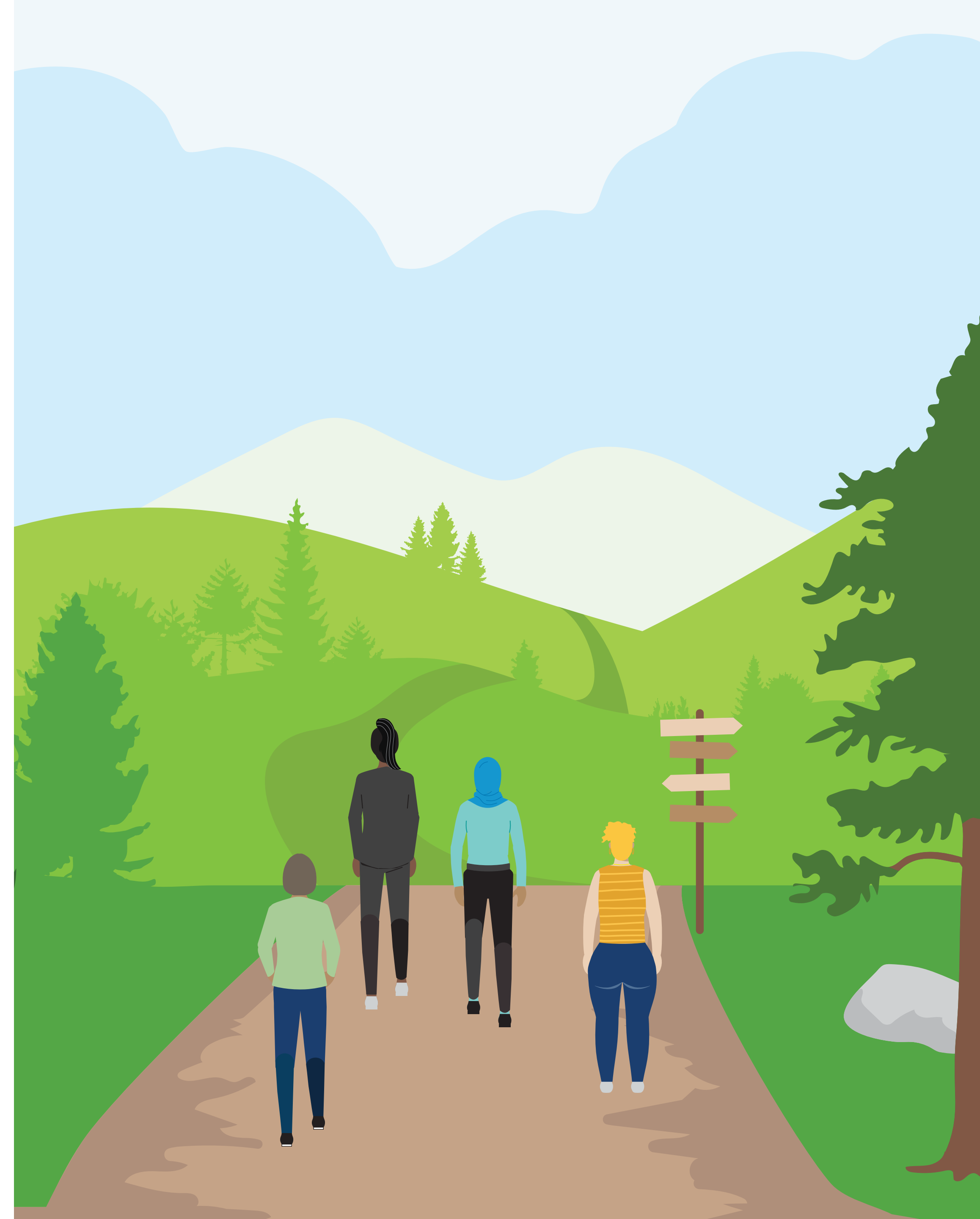
Good health is an essential part of every woman's path to professional success, leading to better performance that enriches their lives and enhances their employer's bottom line. No matter your role or industry, you can champion women's health and create a more inclusive and supportive space where all can thrive.

To begin, it's important to understand that a discussion around women's health encompasses many individuals.

People assigned female at birth, including those who are transgender, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, or gender fluid, have many of the same health needs. At Kaiser Permanente, we respect, affirm, and celebrate people of all gender identities.

Women go through many health stages across their working years and must navigate a lot of changes along the way. Employers can play a central role in nurturing their well-being at every step. By understanding their unique health needs, you can design a more equitable benefits strategy to uplift women and your entire workforce.

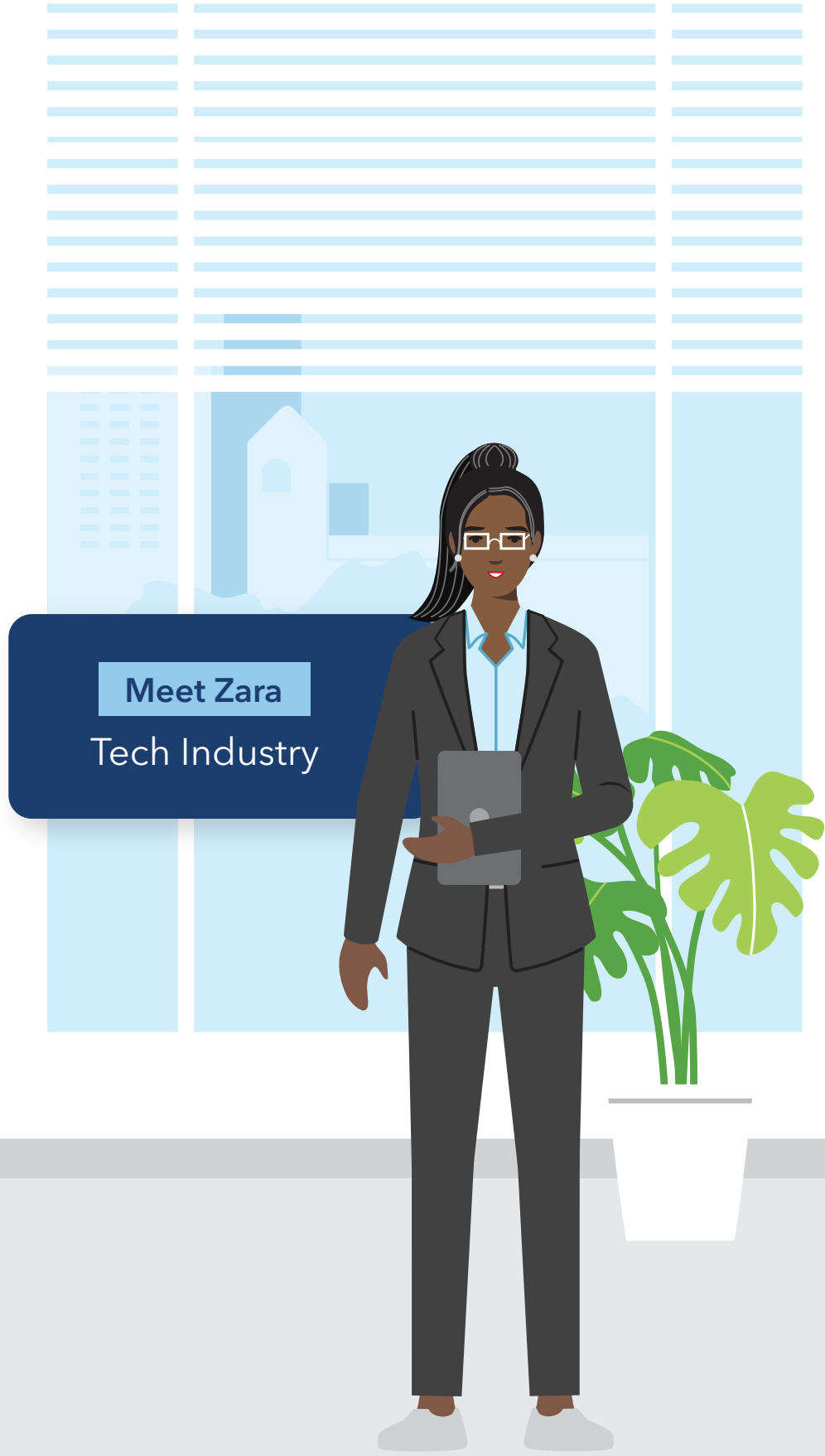
Meet four women at various points on their career path and learn about some of the health conditions they are managing. Through the interactive prompts, explore how their health needs impact them in the workplace. Discover workforce health strategies to help them overcome barriers and leverage opportunities to be their best.



Be a Champion for Women's Health

The four people introduced in this guide represent many women in the working world who are striving toward personal and professional success, and at the same time, facing unique barriers that could hold them back. Learn how leaders, managers, and coworkers become allies on their journey towards better health and well-being.

Get started by clicking on one of the women below to explore how providing support for their health needs positively affects their lives and careers.



Sasha | Education

Sasha (they/them) just started their career as an elementary school teacher. They are passionate about teaching, and they give all their time to building their career, including running the afterschool program and providing online tutoring on the weekends (which also helps them make ends meet financially).

Roll over the icons to uncover the hidden health issues they have been managing on top of their career.



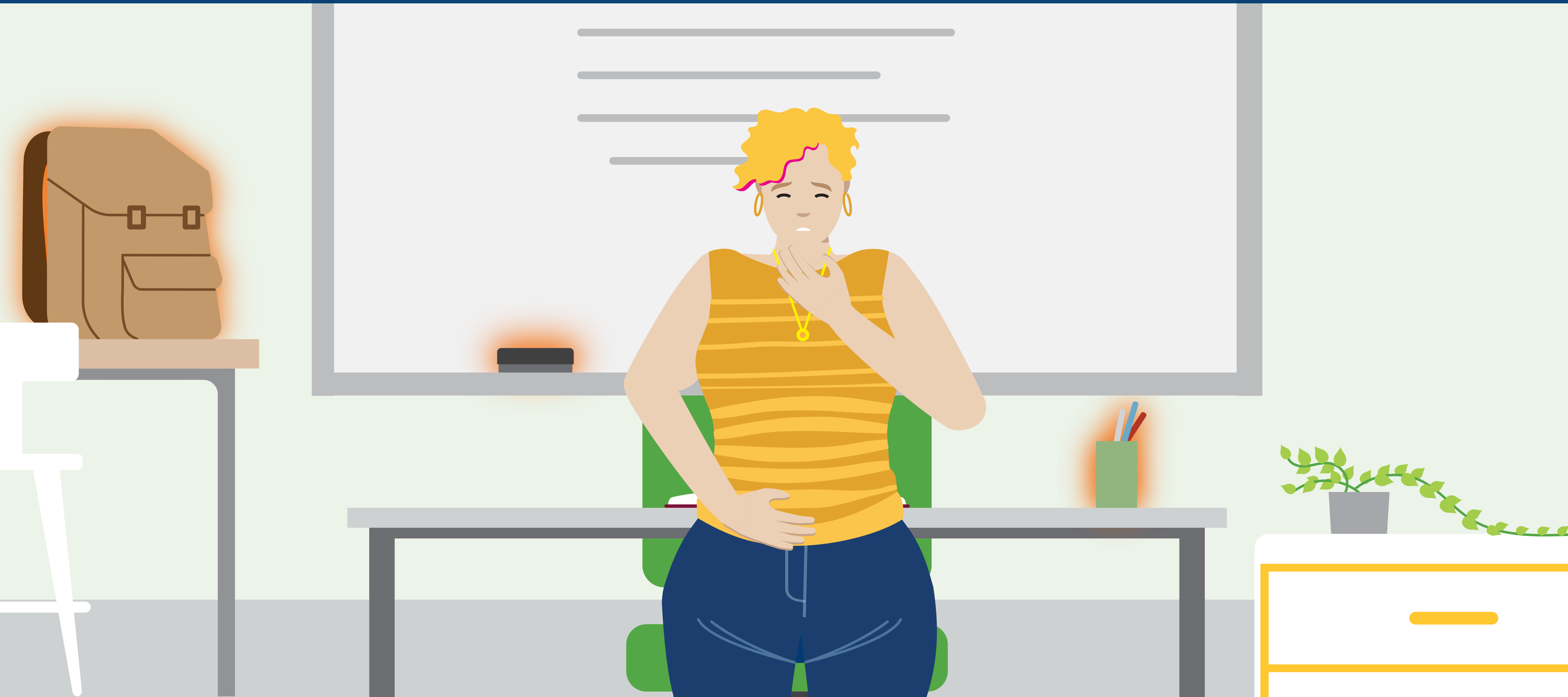
The classroom is Sasha's favorite place to be, but for a few days every month, they are terrified to go to work.

Roll over the scene to uncover their hidden fears.



Sasha is not alone. Endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome are two common diseases that affect one in every 10 women. They can cause serious symptoms, like heavy bleeding and debilitating pain.¹

Roll over the interactive elements to understand more about these issues.



Here's how you can champion people like Sasha

Roll over their mentor, Eunice, to see how she can help.



Start with empathy and understanding

Women with endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome need to be able to sit or lay down to cope with pain, and they need fast access to a bathroom so they always have the confidence to perform at their best.

Providing more flexibility to onsite employees might look like including more frequent or lengthier breaks during the day. A ready-to-go plan of action for when urgent situations arise during the workday can also give employees and their managers peace of mind.

Understanding that some women have hidden health needs that might be affecting them at work starts with regular conversations built on trust.

By recognizing what your women employees need from their workplace, you can promote relevant tools and resources that are available through your organization's benefits strategy design.

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Marisol | Regional Sales

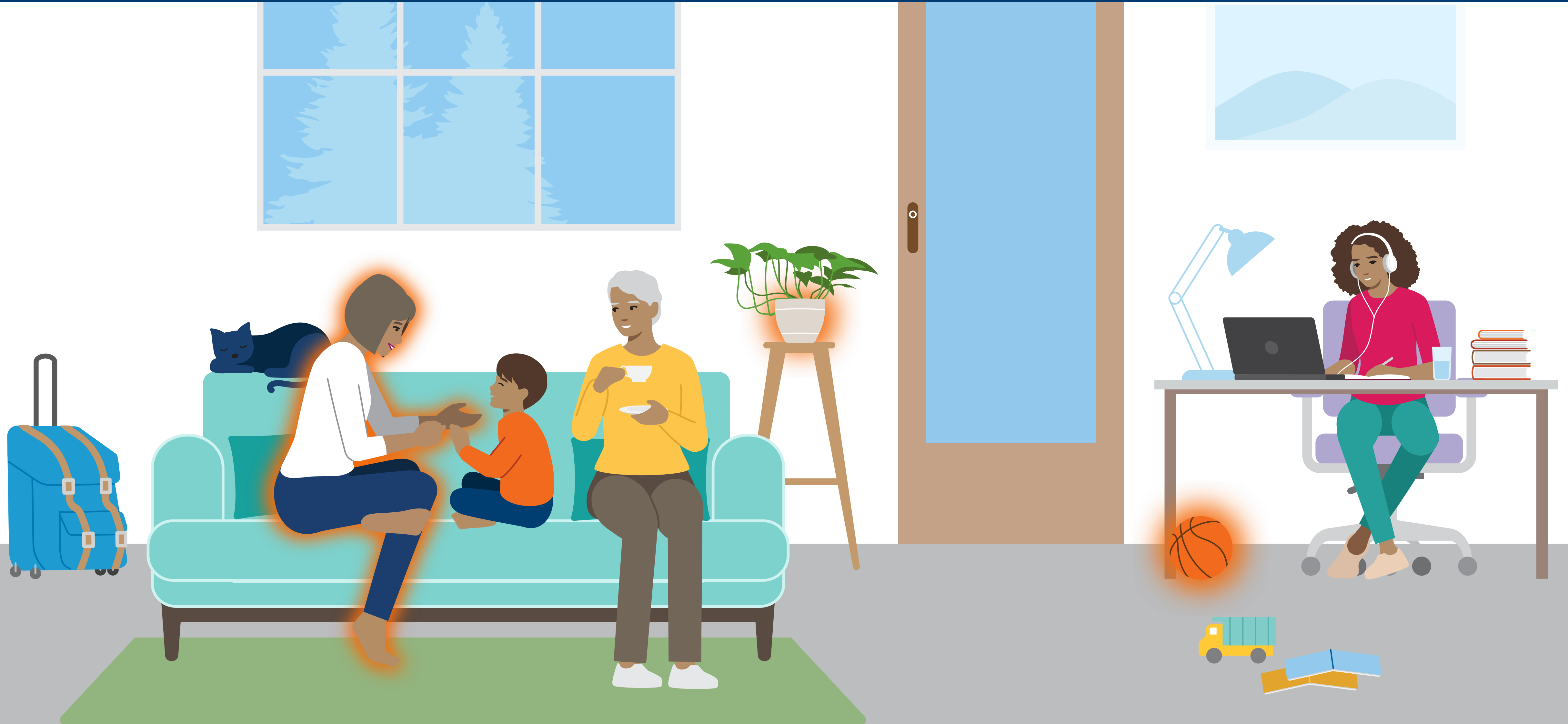
This is Marisol (she/her), a regional sales representative at a major manufacturer. She has just returned to work from family medical leave to care for her mother, who had a stroke. Marisol is among the top-performing salespeople in the company, and her team is glad to have her back.

Roll over the icons to uncover the hidden health issues she is trying to balance along with her career.



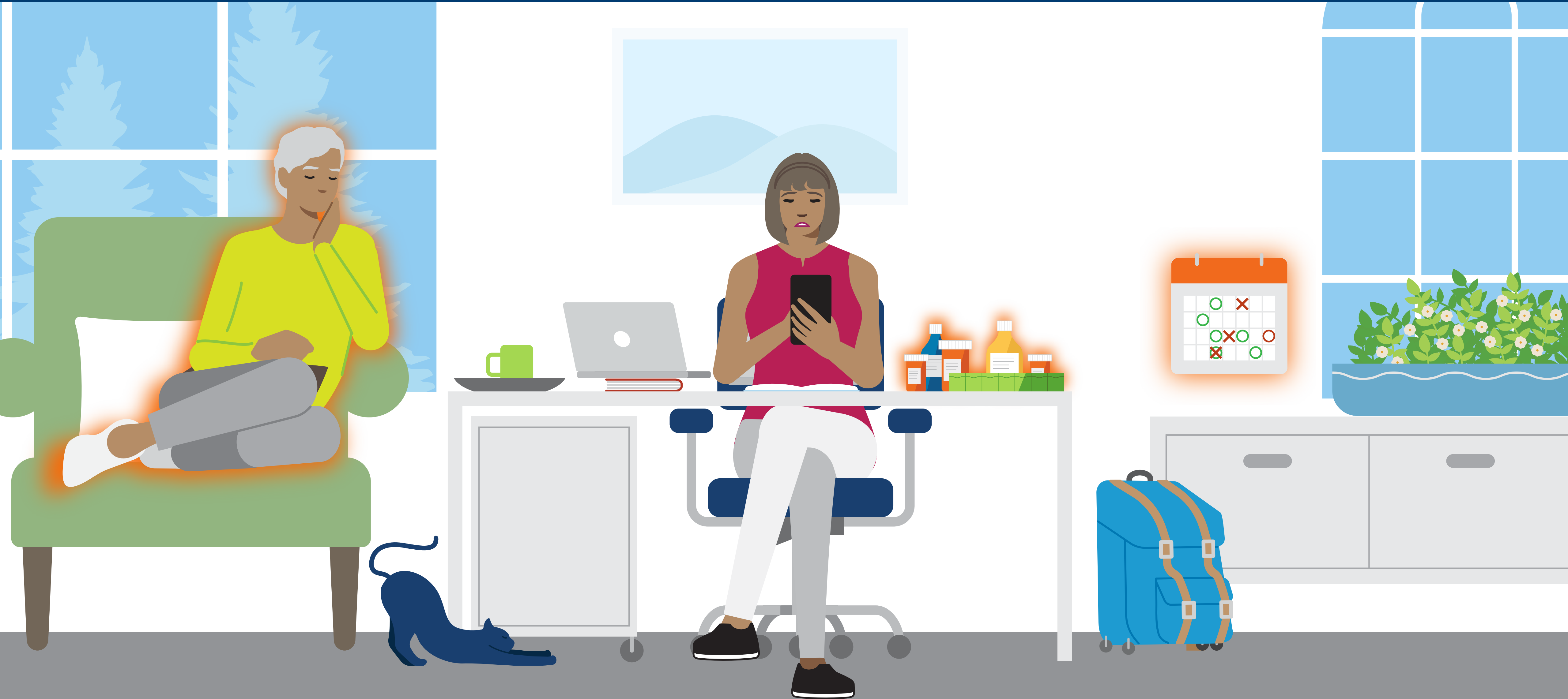
When her mother fell ill, Marisol was grateful to be able to take the time away from work to help in her recovery.

Roll over the highlighted people and objects in the scene to reveal the worries she shares with many caregivers.



The number of women employees who must provide caregiving for a family member other than their children continues to grow.

Roll over the interactive elements to understand how this affects them at work and at home.



Women like Marisol thrive when they are supported by their employers.

Roll over to see helpful conversations between Marisol and her company's CEO and human resources manager.



Say hello to psychological safety

Psychological safety is “the belief that one can speak up without risk of punishment or humiliation.” This means a psychologically safe workplace is one where employees do not feel intimidated by coworkers or supervisors and feel able to freely voice their opinions and concerns.⁷ According to a recent report, workers who felt supported with their mental health overall were 26% less likely to report at least one symptom of a mental health condition in the past year.⁸

Respondents who felt supported by their employer also tended to be less likely to experience mental health symptoms, less likely to underperform and miss work, and more likely to feel comfortable talking about their mental health at work.

They had higher job satisfaction, greater intentions to stay at their company, and more positive views of their company and its leaders. In short, employees were more trusting of their company and were more likely to feel proud to work there.

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Naomi | Hospitality

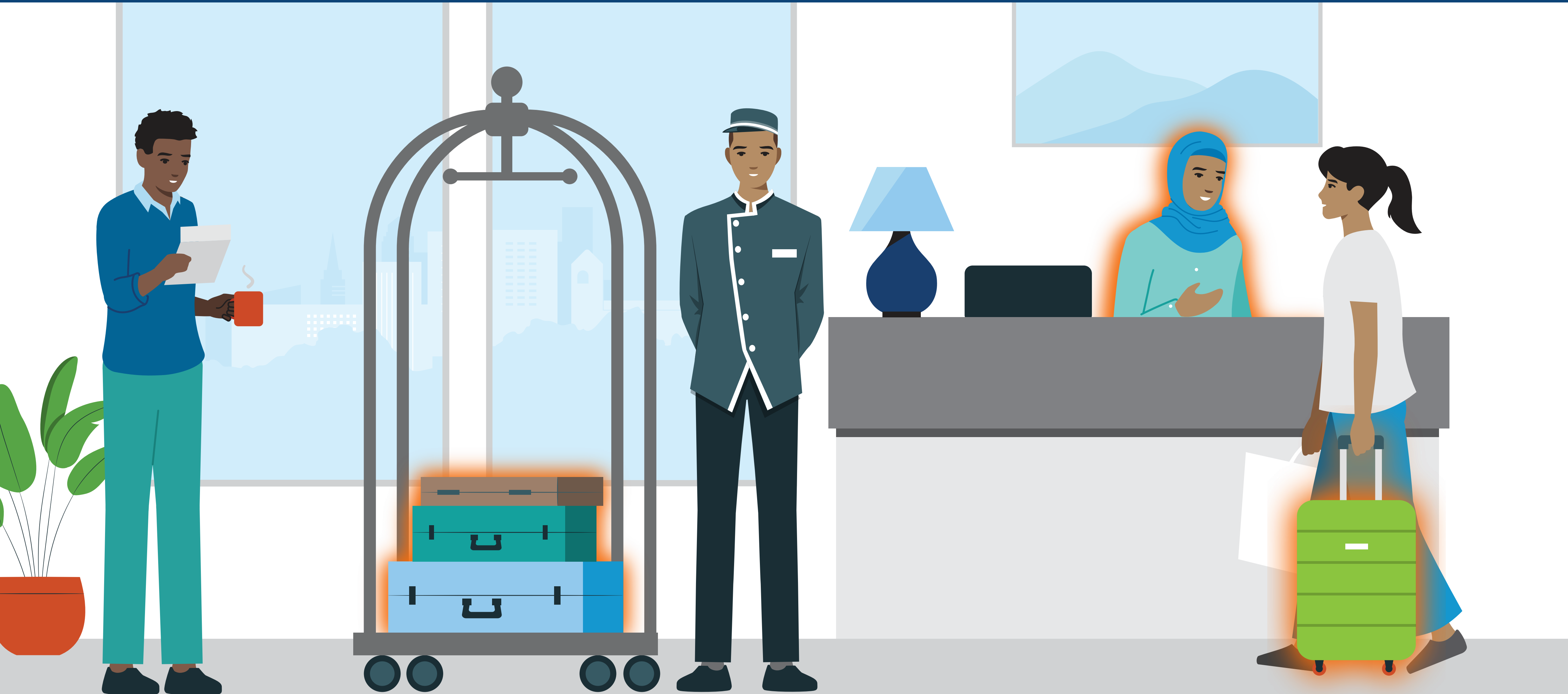
Meet Naomi (she/her), the housekeeping manager for a boutique hotel in the city. She has been on staff for more than a decade and worked her way up to managing the entire department. Naomi was promoted to her current role a year ago and is working hard to prove herself as a leader and to earn the trust of her team.

Roll over the icons to uncover the hidden health issues she's been managing on top of her career.



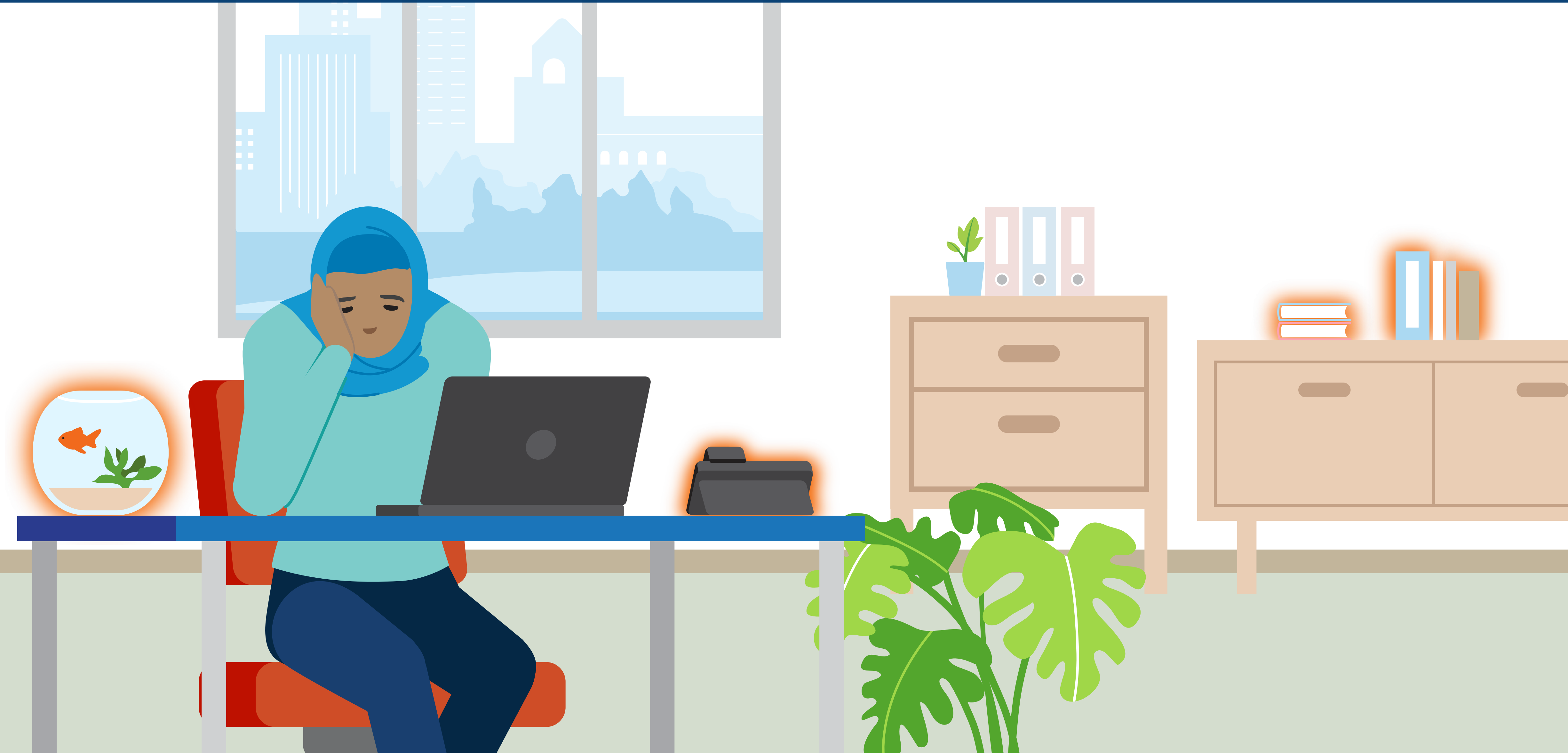
While guest traffic has returned to pre-pandemic levels, the talent Naomi lost on her team has been difficult to replace.

Roll over the scene to see what's really on her mind.



Naomi is just one of thousands of working moms who experience pelvic floor disorders.

Roll over the interactive elements in her environment to discover how this issue affects women everywhere.



Here's how you can champion Naomi in the workplace.

Roll over the interactive scene to learn more.



Virtual care can provide real results

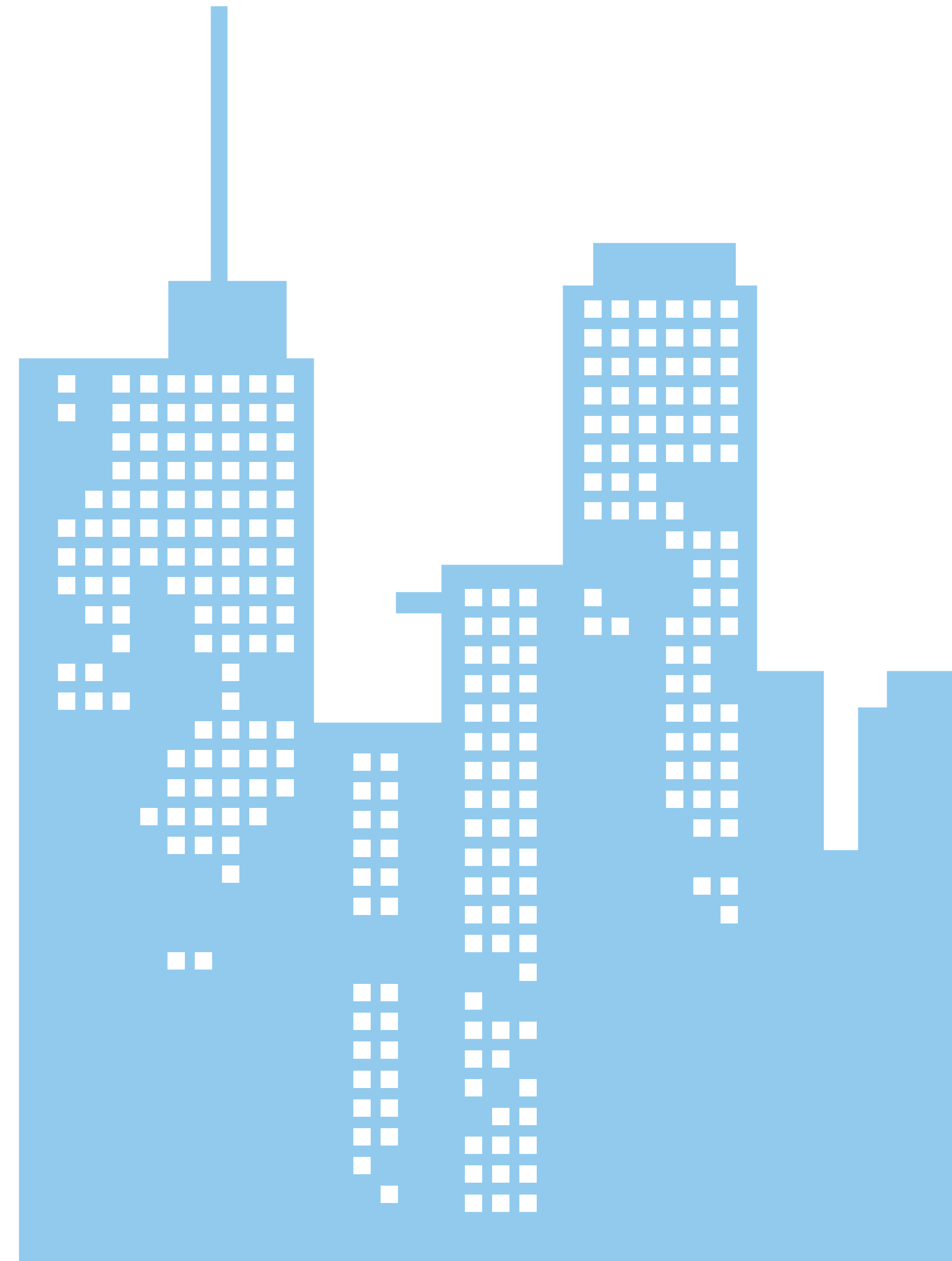
Having flexible schedules and being able to work from home does work for some employees.

For others, fully integrated virtual care services can help employees save precious time commuting to and from specialists, while still providing them with holistic care.

Naomi benefits from follow-up physical therapy sessions in a convenient and private new wellness room, which takes a fraction of the time she would need to commute to an in-person visit.

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Zara | Tech Industry

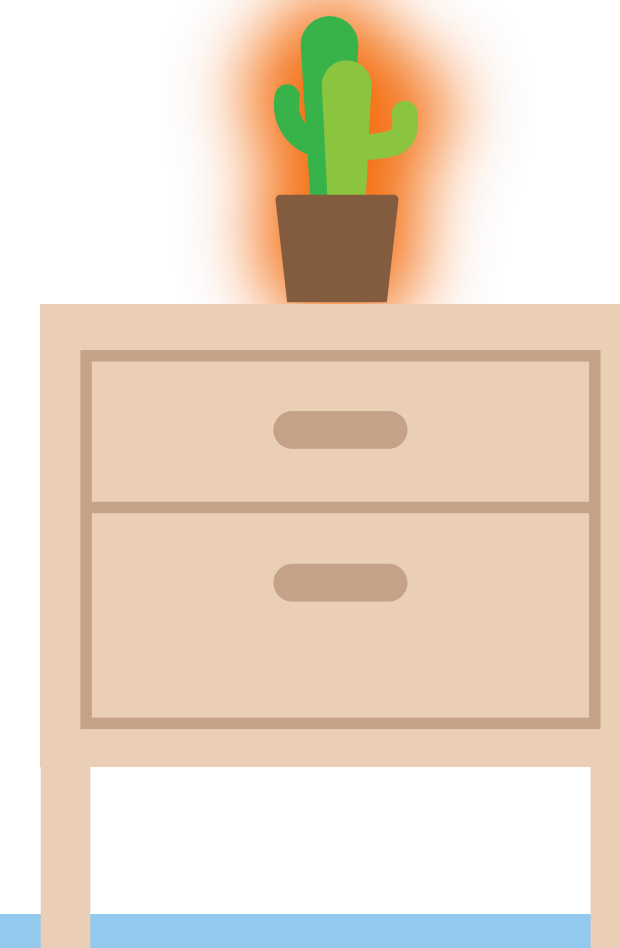
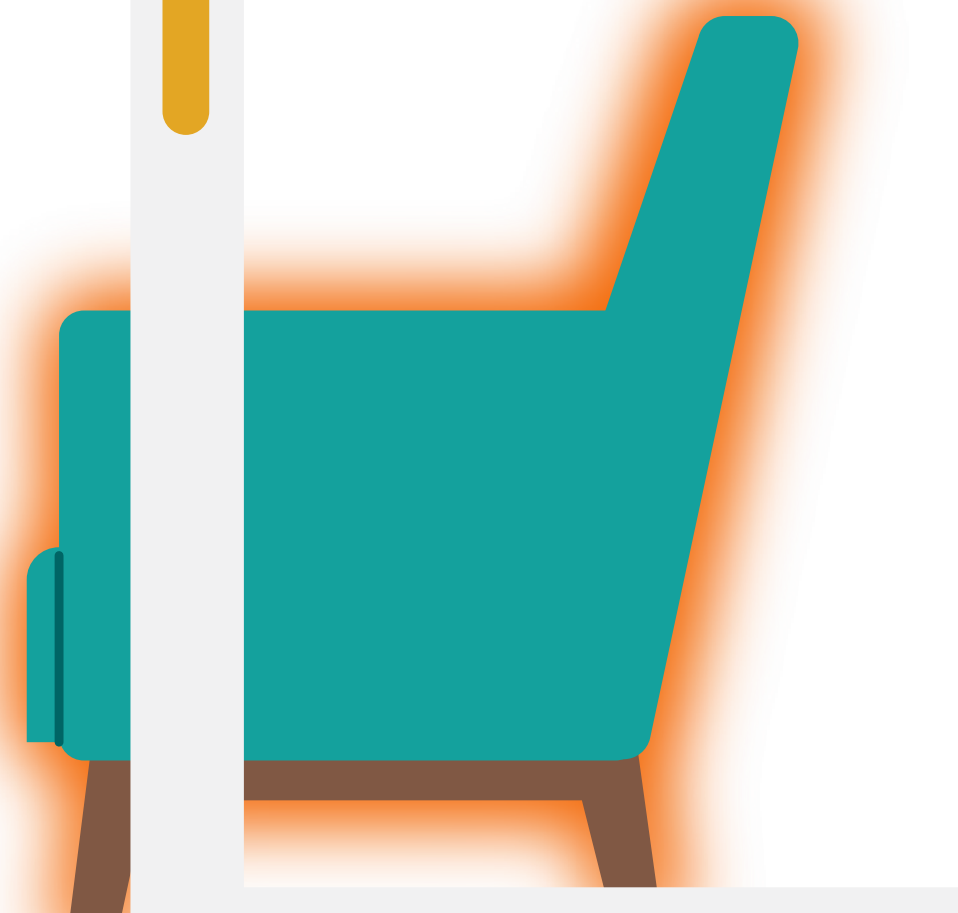
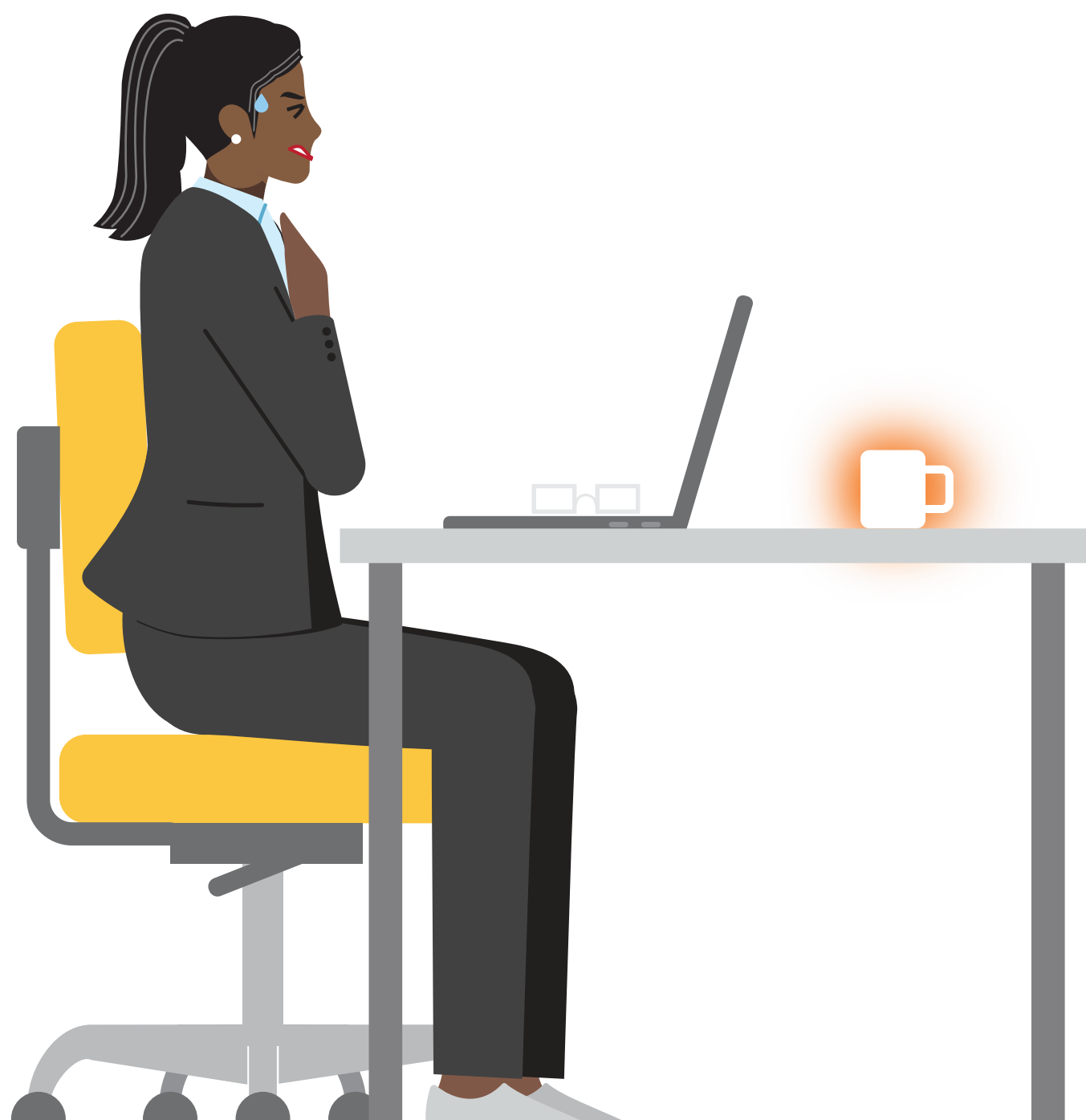
Meet Zara (she/her), the chief technology officer at a Fortune 500 company. As a leader in her field, she's always in demand. Board meetings, speaking events, and client calls compete for her time and energy.

Roll over the icons to uncover the hidden health issues she's been managing on top of her career.



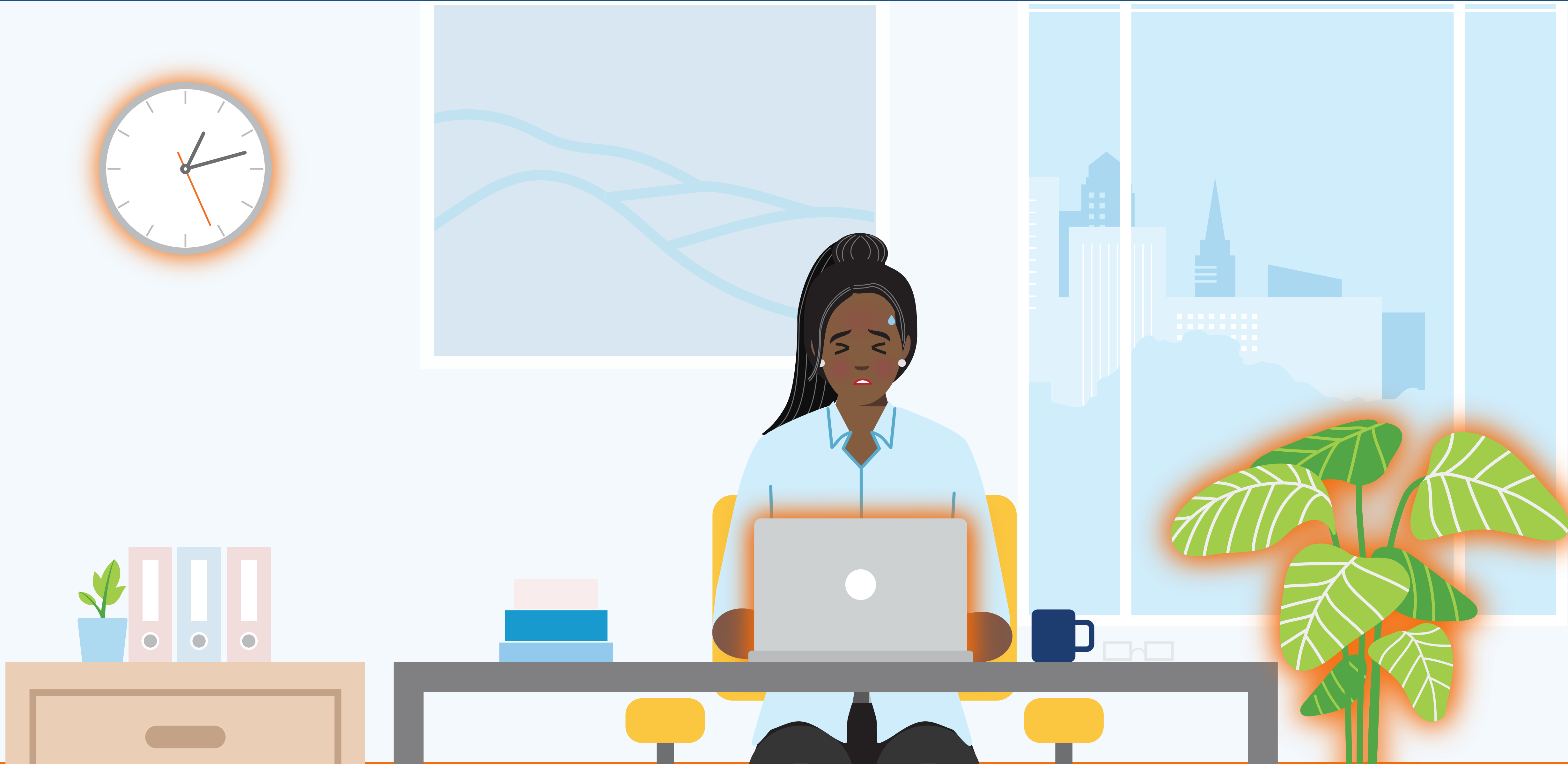
**At home, Zara can deal with the discomfort of menopause privately.
But being at the office makes her feel like she's under a spotlight.**

Roll over the scene to see what she and her coworker are really thinking.



Zara isn't alone.

Roll over the interactive elements in her environment to discover how this issue affects women everywhere.



Here's how you can champion Zara in the workplace.

Roll over Zara's coworkers to learn more.



Women leaders contribute to better business outcomes

Did you know companies able to attract, promote, and retain above-average diversity on their management teams report innovation revenue that is 19% higher than companies with less diverse leadership?¹³

You can have a huge impact on women leaders like Zara by implementing tactics to better understand her needs and adapting policies accordingly.

Take actions like:

- ✓ Have frequent one-on-one conversations to better understand unspoken employee needs.
- ✓ Provide menopause relief with access to flexible time off.
- ✓ Help your women employees understand all of the benefits available, so they can lean on these when they need to.

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Be an ally

Women are demanding more from employers, and they're leaving their companies in unprecedented numbers in order to get it. Women make up more than half of the workforce. Providing equitable wellness and benefit strategies centered around their unique needs can build lasting trust and loyalty with women employees.

By evaluating your company's benefits, policies, and communication strategies around women's health, and acting on the key steps outlined here, you are on your way to creating not only a more loyal and resilient employee population – but a healthier one at that.

There are significant opportunities to lean in and remove barriers, allowing your women coworkers to thrive at work. Being their ally can be as simple as asking, "What do you need in order to thrive in your personal and professional life?" Listen for the key answers unique to your workforce to help you hone in on where to act.



Strategies for employers

Gather insights

- ✓ Start with data. Ask your women employees what they want and need.
- ✓ Keep the dialogue going with regular check-ins to ensure your women employees feel heard.

Evaluate and track utilization trends

- ✓ Frequently evaluate benefits to include access to new care options on the market, such as reimbursing women for fertility treatments, providing menopause relief benefits, and offering paid family leave.
- ✓ Track usage of employee health programs in order to see how accessible they really are.

Create a safe and inclusive culture

- ✓ Create awareness and offer training for your workforce to improve psychological safety.
- ✓ Integrate equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts and perspectives as an essential part of strategy design.
- ✓ Consider creating private wellness spaces for employees to exercise, rest, meditate, or pray in.

Offer flexible benefits

- ✓ Create working schedules with flexibility that accounts for tasks like taking care of sick family members or making doctor appointments.
- ✓ Offer flexible time off to women who are dealing with menstrual or menopausal discomfort or require additional care.



Encourage healthy behaviors

- ✓ Incentivize healthy behaviors such as staying up to date on preventive screenings and vaccinations.
- ✓ Offer onsite programs that allow employees to prioritize their health while at work. These can include onsite screenings, classes, and coaching.

Promote tools and resources

- ✓ Make self-care tools and resources easily available to support emotional well-being and prevent burnout in the workplace.
- ✓ Help employees understand any employee assistance programs or additional benefits they may be entitled to through your organization.

Engage with your health care partners

- ✓ Ensure your health care partner prioritizes mental health and addresses social determinants of health.
- ✓ Partner with integrated health care organizations that utilize virtual care and remote patient monitoring for easier access to high-quality preventive and specialty care.
- ✓ Ensure you have health care partners who prioritize their own workforce DEI programs for care teams, e.g., those that address implicit/unconscious bias.

Meet someone new



About Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente has been providing high-quality health care and coverage for more than 75 years. By connecting care with coverage, we pioneered a new model for health care, where things are designed to work together – and help our members thrive. Our care model enables our teams to think and work as one, coordinating your care seamlessly, so you don't have to – and delivering better care when it matters most.

When employees receive care from a Kaiser Permanente doctor, every visit is captured through their electronic health record, so their doctor can use their health history to inform their care. If they need to see a specialist, important information about their health is accessible before they even arrive.

Having a good health plan is important. So is getting high-quality care. Kaiser Permanente was built to give you both.



Endnotes:

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5. Kathryn Tyler, "Supporting Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities" SHRM, HR Magazine, March 2022
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9. See note 1
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