

**Defining the Problem and Finding the Solution
to the Mental Health in the Workplace Crisis** —

2023

WHITE PAPER

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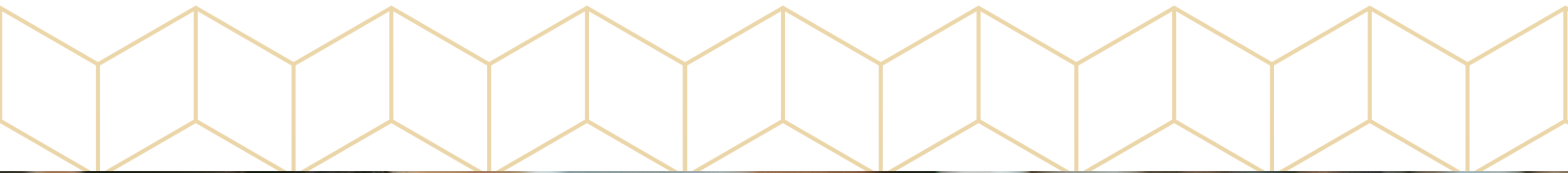
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OVERVIEW

Organizations need to be more engaged with the importance of addressing mental health in the workplace. Employee wellness has a significant impact on the success of an organization. Therefore, employees' mental health is of imperative importance. This whitepaper is going to review the most critical aspects of mental health and wellness in the workplace, which include psychological risk management, early intervention strategies for those suffering from mental health concerns, and supporting a culture that is more inclusive to these challenges that so many people face. The outcome that can be drawn is that organizations have a vested interest in ensuring they have sufficient policies to help their employees thrive the best they can in all areas of their lives.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Mental health is vital to overall well-being and significantly impacts employee productivity, engagement, and organizational success. By addressing mental health in the workplace, organizations are supporting the need for a positive and solutions-oriented culture that benefits both employees and the bottom line.
- There is a growing prevalence of mental health issues and, therefore, the need for proactive strategies to address them. Organizations can identify and mitigate psychological risks that may impact employee mental health and well-being by understanding psychological risks. Early intervention strategies, such as awareness campaigns and accessible support systems, play a crucial role in addressing mental health concerns before they escalate.
- Creating an enabling mental wellness culture is essential for supporting employee well-being. This involves promoting work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, and destigmatizing mental health discussions. Organizations that have successfully cultivated such cultures have seen improvements in employee engagement, productivity, and overall satisfaction.
- Innovative workplace accommodations and return-to-work initiatives support individuals with mental health challenges. Organizations can facilitate smooth employee transitions and create an inclusive and supportive work environment by offering tailored accommodations and implementing effective return-to-work programs.

INTRODUCTION




The COVID pandemic drastically reframed the way organizations are talking about mental health.

Pam Ford

Founder- Mental Health Me Too

Mental health is no longer a topic that can be ignored in the workplace, although it is still taboo to both suffering employees and much of the organization upstream. Mental health is critical to employee well-being, productivity, and organizational success today. Organizations prioritizing mental health and creating supportive environments are reaping the benefits of a happier, healthier, and more engaged workforce.

The importance of mental health in the workplace naturally reveals itself through the organization's employees. Those who experience good mental health are likely to perform better, show resilience with challenges, and contribute positively to the organization's overall success. On the other hand, untreated mental health issues for employees can lead to



decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates. By recognizing the impact of mental health on both individuals and the bottom line, organizations can understand the high value that comes from prioritizing mental health issues before they further escalate into a more severe crisis.

Despite warnings and widely publicized incidents, the prevalence of mental health issues in the workplace is alarming. According to recent studies, a significant portion of the workforce experiences mental health challenges, ranging from stress and anxiety to depression and burnout. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these issues, with remote work, social isolation, and increased uncertainty contributing to heightened stress levels.

Moving from reactive to proactive and preventative measures for mental health is an organization's best chance for the future.

Because of this, we must address the various components of effective mental health management in the workplace, including psychological risk management, early intervention strategies, cultivating enabling cultures of mental wellness, innovative workplace accommodations, and successful case studies that demonstrate this can be done.

By proactively prioritizing mental health, organizations create an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and empowered. In doing so, they enhance employee well-being and foster a culture of productivity, engagement, and organizational success.

THE THINK TANK

PARTICIPANTS ADDRESSED FIVE KEY TOPICS

Topic One

Psychological risk
management

Topic Two

Early intervention strategies
for workplace related mental
health issues

Topic Three

Cultivating enabling
cultures of mental
wellness

Topic Four

Innovative workplace
accommodations and
return to work initiatives

Topic Five

Successful approaches to promoting
mental health in the workplace through
case study analysis





PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological risks in the workplace are those with the potential to impact employee mental health and well-being negatively. These risks often arise from various sources, including work-related stress, excessive workloads, poor work-life balance, interpersonal conflicts, discriminatory behaviors, and lack of support or recognition. Understanding and managing these risks is crucial for promoting a psychologically safe and healthy work environment.

Discriminatory behaviors by organizational leaders, such as bias, prejudice, and harassment, are major contributors to these workplace psychological risks. These behaviors lead to hostile environments, fear, and exclusion, all of which are feelings that increase stress and anxiety while decreasing job satisfaction. Furthermore, discrimination based on race, gender, age, or disability also undermines psychological safety and erodes employee well-being.

The first step in effective psychological risk management is the identification and assessment of risks, including discriminatory behaviors. Organizations can utilize various tools, surveys, and audits to gather data and insights on discrimination within their workplace. These assessments provide a revealing picture that can uncover potential areas of concern and inform targeted interventions and training programs.



Psychological Safety is the primary way employers can protect their workforce's mental health.

Dr. Christopher Metzler
DEI and Academic Thought
Leader

Addressing these discriminatory behaviors requires a comprehensive approach that involves education, policy development, and enforcement. Organizations should invest in diversity and inclusion training to raise awareness and promote respectful and inclusive behaviors. Clear policies against discrimination should also be established, communicated, and enforced consistently. Creating channels for reporting incidents and supporting victims is essential to this process, so there is no doubt about the severe nature of discrimination.

To achieve these risk mitigation goals, supportive supervision and leadership play a crucial role. Organizational leaders set the example and tone to promote fairness, equality, and respect in all interactions and decision-making. By cultivating this culture, leaders can mitigate the psychological risks associated with discrimination, promoting an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and psychologically safe.

EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR WORKPLACE-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Early intervention is a crucial element in effectively addressing mental health issues in the workplace. By identifying and supporting employees who may be experiencing mental health challenges early on, organizations can prevent the escalation of these issues and provide timely assistance for recovery and well-being.

This effort begins with raising awareness and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. Awareness campaigns and training programs can educate employees about common mental health challenges, promote understanding, and encourage open conversations. By encouraging a supportive and non-judgmental environment, organizations empower employees to take control of their mental health, seek help, and access support networks while ensuring confidentiality.

Providing employees with well-publicized, confidential, and easy-to-access resources such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), counseling services, or mental health hotlines will encourage people needing help to seek assistance at the earliest signs of distress. In addition to external support, organizations should focus on creating a workplace culture that promotes psychological safety and encourages help-seeking behaviors. This involves ensuring you facilitate an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health concerns with their managers or HR professionals. HR and managers should receive training on recognizing the signs of mental health challenges, effectively communicating their knowledge with employees, and connecting them to appropriate resources. Additionally, management in organizations can create a positive mental health culture by establishing regular check-ins between managers and employees to discuss work-related stressors and well-being, providing flexibility and reasonable accommodations when needed, and promoting work-life balance.

Pro Tips for Preventing Burnout

- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Define specific work hours and stick to them. Avoid checking work emails or messages during your off-hours to create a healthy separation.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize self-care activities such as exercise, meditation, hobbies, or spending quality time with loved ones. Regular self-care routines can help reduce stress and maintain mental and emotional well-being.
- **Take Regular Breaks:** Incorporate short breaks throughout your workday. Step away from your desk, stretch, or go for a walk. Breaks can refresh your mind and prevent burnout.
- **Delegate and Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to delegate tasks when possible and seek support from colleagues or supervisors when needed. Sharing responsibilities can lighten your workload and reduce stress.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Avoid overcommitting and set realistic, achievable goals. Break larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps. Setting achievable goals can prevent feelings of overwhelm and burnout.

CULTIVATING ENABLING CULTURES OF MENTAL WELLNESS

Mentally healthy workplace culture is a cornerstone of employee well-being, engagement, and overall organizational success. This enabling culture of mental wellness is characterized by open communication, supportive leadership, and a commitment to employee well-being. It involves creating an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health, seeking support when needed, and knowing their well-being is valued by the organization.

Promoting work-life balance and flexible work arrangements is a vital aspect of an enabling culture of mental wellness that managers can embrace for their organization and the mutual benefit of the employee and business. The first step is to recognize that employees have personal lives and responsibilities outside of work. The second step is to know that providing flexibility to manage these demands aids in helping to reduce stress and promote overall well-being.



This can include offering flexible working hours remote work options, and encouraging employees to take breaks and vacations to recharge.

Destigmatizing mental health discussions is another critical component. By openly addressing mental health and creating platforms for conversations, organizations can break down barriers and eliminate the fear of judgment or discrimination. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and fostering a culture of empathy and understanding.



Megan Effertz
VP, Brand Leader- Mentera



Destigmatizing mental health at work isn't just about compassion; it's about recognizing that mental well-being is the cornerstone of a thriving, resilient, and innovative workforce. When we break the silence, we create spaces where everyone can bring their whole selves to work, contributing their best to our collective success.



INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS AND RETURN-TO- WORK INITIATIVES

Innovative workplace accommodations and return-to-work Initiatives play a vital role in supporting individuals with mental health challenges and facilitating their successful integration into the workforce.

Workplace accommodations refer to adjustments made to job duties, schedules, or physical environments that enable individuals with mental health conditions to perform their work effectively. Organizations can help employees manage their symptoms, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being by providing tailored accommodations.



INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

There are various innovative approaches to accommodations that go beyond traditional practices. Examples include:

- Flexible scheduling allows employees to manage their work hours based on their energy levels and mental health needs.
- Modified workstations can also be implemented, offering a comfortable and personalized workspace that minimizes distractions and promotes focus.
- Job redesign is another innovative accommodation strategy involving restructuring tasks and responsibilities to better align with an individual's abilities and strengths. This approach promotes a sense of fulfillment, engagement, and job satisfaction, contributing to improved mental health outcomes.

An effective return-to-work initiative also helps employees return to work after a mental health-related absence. Phased return programs provide a gradual reintegration process, allowing employees to adjust their workload and responsibilities over time. Employee support plans offer individualized assistance, including access to counseling services, mentorship, and ongoing monitoring to ensure a smooth transition and sustained well-being.

SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Here are some companies that have already been pioneers in the mental wellness area of their organizations. They have taken the needs of their workforce's well-being and implemented a plan.

Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson has been recognized for its comprehensive approach to employee mental health. The company offers a range of resources and programs, including mental health education, counseling services, and employee assistance programs. They also prioritize destigmatizing mental health by encouraging open conversations and training leaders to support their teams.

patagonia®

Outdoor clothing company Patagonia is known for its commitment to employee well-being. They offer a flexible work environment, including options for remote work and flexible.

schedules, which allows employees to find a better balance between work and personal life. Patagonia also provides on-site childcare facilities, mindfulness programs, and mental health resources to support employees' well-being.



Salesforce has implemented several initiatives to promote mental wellness among its employees. They offer mindfulness programs, meditation rooms, and regular wellness challenges to encourage self-care. Additionally, Salesforce has a Mental Health Allies program where employees can become trained allies to provide support and resources to their colleagues.



Google strongly focuses on employee mental health and well-being. They provide comprehensive mental health benefits, including managers' access to therapy and counseling services and mental health training. Google also offers a range of well-being programs, such as mindfulness workshops and yoga classes, to support employees in managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

These organizations serve as examples of how companies can prioritize and cultivate enabling cultures of mental wellness. By implementing strategies and programs that support employee well-being, these organizations have created spaces where employees can thrive personally and professionally.

It's important to note that each organization's approach may be unique, and what works for one may not work for another. However, these examples can provide inspiration and insights for other organizations looking to create their own enabling cultures of mental wellness.



Rachel Schneider
Founder/CEO - Canary

At Canary, we work with organizations to support the mental health of their workforce by eliminating financial insecurity.



The **CONCLUSION**

By embracing these strategies, organizations can create workplaces where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive in all capacities of their lives. This makes the integration of mental health initiatives into the workplace a moral imperative with a strategic advantage. Together, we can work toward building mentally healthy work environments that benefit individuals, organizations, and society.

Thank You
**TO THE TASKFORCE MEMBERS, HOST,
AND SPONSORS**

A portrait of a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark pinstripe suit, white shirt, and a dark red tie. He is standing against a plain grey background. The text 'TASKFORCE MEMBERS' is overlaid on the left side of the image in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

TASKFORCE MEMBERS



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Note:

The names and organizations of some task force members may have changed since the think tank convened.

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A grayscale background image of three people in an office setting. A woman on the left is seated and smiling, holding a mug. A woman in the center is standing and smiling, also holding a mug. A man on the right is seated, facing the women, and holding a mug. They are in a modern office with shelves and a plant in the background.

THANK YOU!

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