

5 ways to design a culture of mental well-being for a stressed-out workforce

We are in the midst of a national mental health crisis. Two out of five adults report symptoms of anxiety or depression. We know that mental health occurs along a continuum, with thriving and positive mental well-being at one end and serious mental health conditions or addictions at the other. In between, however, there are many shades of substance use, anxiety, depression, and other conditions that vary in intensity and impact. Consider the following actions to help employees cope with stressful times and stay physically and emotionally well.

1. Communicate effectively

Demonstrate commitment from the top and lead by example, communicating that it is important to address stress, mental health conditions, and substance use.

This can start with “pulse checks”— emails sent to employees that ask two or three short questions about their work, life, mentorship, and health. Or it could be as simple as, “How are you feeling?” and “What’s giving you the greatest stress this week?” Always provide a reminder on how to access mental health resources and professional help for those in immediate crisis.



Tips for HR teams:

- + Communicate effectively
- + Understand the need
- + Know and listen for signs of distress
- + Encourage self-care
- + Make help available



2. Understand the need

Understand the impact of psychological distress, mental illnesses, and substance-use disorders on your population. This includes using employee surveys, benefits reports, disability claims, and productivity assessments.

At Providence, we look at metrics to better understand utilization of behavioral health services and engagement in mental well-being programs. We identify members with higher rates of distress and gaps in care and provide outreach to help these members navigate their health care plan and create tailored support to help them overcome barriers and achieve their goals.

3. Know and listen for the signs of distress

Invest in training to equip leaders with the skills, language, and norms to support their team members.

Consider investing in a learning platform where leaders can take classes, read articles, listen to podcasts, or watch videos on supporting employees' mental health. Offer a short training that focuses on recognizing signs of distress, making clear that it's driven by a genuine desire to connect employees with the right support and resources. When organizations make mental well-being a priority, teams can, in turn, offer greater value to their clients.

4. Encourage self-care

Create an inclusive culture where those seeking treatment and self-care are supported, recovery is celebrated, and social connectivity is a priority.

Maintain an open dialogue. Remind employees to take regular breaks, prioritize sleep, and check in on one another. Encourage leaders to use team meetings for natural social engagement and ask about weekend plans, what everyone is doing to stay well, and whether they're getting enough sleep. Remind employees to practice self-care in ways that are meaningful to them, whether it's meditation, reading, physical activity, or spending time with family.

5. Make help available

Embrace strategies to address key stressors, improve behavioral health literacy, promote mental well-being, and prevent substance misuse.

At Providence, we offer solutions across the behavioral health continuum. Members have access to everything from self-help tools to 24/7 crisis support. We make it easy and affordable to access help, virtually and in-person.

**Want to learn more about how you can support workplace mental well-being?
Our team will be glad to help!**

WorkplaceWellness@providence.org | [ProvidenceHealthPlan.com](https://www.providencehealthplan.com)

