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# An Employer's Guide to Mental Health in the Workplace.

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*Talent Activated.*

# Introduction.

The average person spends one third of their life at work, which is a lot of time dedicated to helping a business thrive. And with that comes a toll physically and mentally on a person. Yet, companies have often skipped the responsibility of combatting this experience with tools and resources to support their employees' well being.

While the effects of mental health at work have been studied since the early 1900s, it wasn't until the early 2000s that companies actually began to implement practices in the workplace that supported employees' mental health. And even since then, mental health support is not in the majority when it comes to companies offering these benefits. However, its day of reckoning may be on the horizon.

Employees are starting to become more comfortable in voicing the support they need mentally within the workplace. The taboo nature of the subject is slowly deteriorating due to the recent surge in research around the topic as well as the effects the pandemic has had on employees. This shift requires employers to find ways to fill the gaps they might have ignored in the past. And employers are still trying to grasp how mental health fits within their workplace.

**This guide explores how poor mental health affects employees as well as businesses and highlights specific ways companies can support and destigmatize mental health within the workplace.** Keep reading to see how your organization can take action today to support the mental well-being of your employees' and in turn help your workforce thrive.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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[SECTION I: The State of Employees' Mental Health](#)

[SECTION II: The Lack of Mental Health Support is Costly](#)

[SECTION III: Destigmatizing Mental Health in the Workplace](#)

[SECTION IV: How Companies Can Support Employees' Mental Health](#)

## SECTION I

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# The State of Employees' Mental Health

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, more than 40 million adults in the United States suffer from anxiety disorder. Extrapolated into the workplace, this means that **nearly one in five employees** is currently dealing with general anxiety, social anxiety, panic-related anxiety, various phobias or another similar disorder. When combined with other mental health conditions including depressions, the ratio of affected adults rises to more than one in four.

## And after the COVID-19 pandemic, this number is unlikely to slow down...

Office life has its stressors, but our own homes seem to have given the conference room a run for its money.

About two weeks after much of America's workforce switched to remote set-ups, Google search traffic for "symptoms of anxiety" hit an all-time high. This was the first signal that life at home might not be so easy. This, combined with the implications of social distancing caused Americans to experience poor mental health.

According to the Pew Research Center, one-third of Americans have experienced "high levels of psychological distress at some point during the extended period of social distancing undertaken to the slow spread of COVID-19."

# 1/3

Of Americans have experienced "high levels of psychological distress" during COVID-19.

## SECTION I

When looking at the reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression of adults year over year, we see a jump from 11% in January to June of 2019 to 41% in January of 2021. That's almost four times higher — an astonishing increase given the effect anxiety and depression can have on one's mental health.

### Symptoms of Anxiety & Depression

**11%**

Of adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression in January 2019.

**41%**

Of adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression in January 2021.

While it seems the worst of the pandemic has passed, the effects it had on employees' mental health are long lasting. Companies can no longer ignore the responsibilities they have to support and protect their workforces' mental health.

## SECTION II

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# The Lack of Mental Health Support is Costly

A business cannot operate without its employees, and a workforce can feel that toll. Not taking care of those who keep a company running smoothly can be costly for organizations. Let's explore why supporting employees' mental health is not only the right thing to do but also reduces the financial burden on companies

## SECTION II

When looking at the wide impact of poor mental health, studies show that it is estimated to cost the global economy \$16 trillion by the year 2030.

The toll anxiety and depression alone has on a person accounts for \$1 trillion each year globally. In the U.S. alone, 6-7 percent of adults suffer from depression which adds up to \$210 billion of economic burden every year. These costs show just how steep the consequences are for not supporting a person's mental health.

If we look at the impact at just a business level, we see a similar sentiment. According to the American Heart Association, depression that goes untreated can cost almost \$10,000 per employee each year. Why? Those who go untreated are that much more likely to miss work and be less productive while on the job.

Companies can't afford to ignore mental health in the workplace. They must tackle the topic head on to ensure their employees have the support they need.

# \$10,000

Is the cost to a business for each employee who goes untreated for depression due to decreased productivity.



### SECTION III

# Destigmatizing Mental Health in the Workplace

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 80 percent of employees with mental health conditions do not get the care they need due to the shame and stigma associated with mental health.

### SECTION III

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So how does the shame and stigma get minimized? According to Harvard’s Faculty of the Arts and Sciences Diversity Summer Panel, the task of defeating these preconceived notions about mental health — which become a “monolith” that affected employees also believe might disrupt their careers — begins with each organization’s leadership. After all, 88 percent of US workers yearn for an open mental health dialogue in the workplace.

To that end, we checked in with 11 companies to hear exactly how they are opening up dialogues, destigmatizing mental health and leading their employees toward the brighter side of treatment.

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## SPRING HEALTH

Brad Lande-Shannon is the chief people and marketing officer at Spring Health, a mental health benefit solution for employees. He believes that the key to destigmatizing mental health is an everyday solution that involves both open discussion and direct access to care.

## **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

We work to destigmatize mental health every day and this includes within our organization. We do this by championing our employees and the stories they have to tell about why they joined Spring Health. We have an employee spotlight content series on our blog and you'll see perfect examples of both myself and Amber Lyon sharing our own personal journey with mental health.

We also hold community gatherings around topics that impact mental health. These gatherings are intimate and group experiences that are facilitated by a care navigator on our team who is a licensed counselor or by a psychologist, psychiatrist or certified coach from our provider network. They are optional events open to all employees.

We've held community gatherings in response to things like the anti-Asian attacks and the Chauvin trial verdict announcement. We've also held groups focused on themes like dismantling racism or narrative transformation for sexual assault victims. **These are opportunities for our employees to come together and process their own emotions and for our culture to be a place of connection, healing and refuge.**

## SPRING HEALTH

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

We have our most senior leaders, including our CEO, regularly share across communication channels that nothing work-related is worth sacrificing our mental health. We are aware of the unique challenges in being the fastest-growing mental health benefits company in our category while also building a culture that supports making accommodations and being compassionate to each individual's journey with mental wellness.



## SPRING HEALTH

We also encourage all managers to ask a question about the state of their direct reports' well-being (rating on a scale of one to five, with five being optimal) in their one-on-ones each week so they can support them in taking action if their well-being is declining.

***“Finally, we have webinars every month with experts on different topics related to mental health. We encourage team members to participate in those educational sessions. “***

**- Brad Lande-Shannon, Chief People & Marketing Officer**

Topics we've covered have included things like how to address specific challenges like sleep or stress management, women's mental health amidst the pandemic, and the Black community and mental health alongside rising racial violence. These sessions help our own leaders deepen their empathy, increase knowledge and gain skills to support teammates.

HARRY'S INC.

## HARRY'S INC.

Maggie Hureau is head of social impact at Harry's Grooming, a global consumer packaged goods platform that addresses the grooming needs of both men and women. Not only does Harry's donate 1 percent of their sales to mental health nonprofits — with a goal of \$5 million in 2021 — but Hureau believes the company can destigmatize mental health in the workplace through a combination of benefits, culture and access to care.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

While we're continually improving the way we integrate employee well-being and mental health into the workplace, over the past few years we've approached these practices from a few different angles. **As a company that's dedicated to this cause — 1 percent of our sales go to mental health nonprofits — it's important to us that we're living this value internally, as well.** It starts with the benefits, policies and perks we offer employees, like our flexible time-off policy (and paid time off to volunteer). This also includes generous and inclusive parental leave, access to benefits, company-wide mental health days, and health and wellness reimbursements.

**HARRY'S INC.**

Second, we've built a culture that values honest and direct feedback — it's built into our management philosophy and structure — and lifelong learning. We showcase these values by talking openly with our employees about the challenges faced by people struggling with mental health, and by providing opportunities for our employees themselves to engage in activities that positively impact well-being.

***“Lastly, we get our team involved. We’ve offered employees the opportunity to train as crisis counselors with Crisis Text Line and The Trevor Project.”***

**- Maggie Hureau, Head of Social Impact**



## **When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

At Harry's, we know that we can continually improve our processes and we plan to keep expanding the way we train managers in mental health. For now, there are five ways that we make sure our employees and managers are able to have an open dialogue with one another about mental health...

1. **Enable Sustainable Success.** This is one of the four pillars of our leadership philosophy. We encourage leaders to use their regularly scheduled check-ins to proactively check in on their direct reports' well-being, and not just wait until there's a crisis or someone comes to them.
2. **Video Discussions.** Our senior leadership team hosted and recorded an honest discussion about how they personally navigate supporting their team's mental health.
3. **Mental Health Guide.** We encourage managers to share our mental health guide as a concrete resource for anyone who needs it.
4. **Resource Sharing.** We routinely share articles, tips, questions and conversation starters for managers to refer to. Particularly after an external event in the world that may warrant additional support, we remind managers to proactively check-in.
5. **Bravely.** This coaching is offered for everyone on our team, including managers that are struggling to navigate tough situations.



## CATALYST SOFTWARE

At Catalyst, a customer success platform, CEO and Co-Founder Edward Chiu believes that destigmatizing mental health begins with an openness to dialogue, sharing and support. Furthermore, company-wide mental health days can allow employees to truly disconnect from work and address their personal well-being.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

Our company culture empowers people to have open conversations about mental health. Each Friday afternoon, we have an all-hands huddle affectionately referred to as “be raw.” Employees are encouraged to share shoutouts and recognize colleagues for their work.

Employees are also invited to speak candidly about both their wins and struggles from the week. Employees are emotionally vulnerable and forthcoming when they talk through their challenges and that’s OK.

We are a self-described “culture of criers.” We know that everyone processes emotions differently. **Additionally, we have a health and wellness Slack channel in which employees have open discussions about mental health and a wellness resource guide that employees continuously populate with outlets they’ve found helpful.**

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

Empathy and compassion are key considerations when we hire members of our leadership team. We hire leaders who aren't just champions in their respective areas of expertise; we hire those who are as focused on their employees' mental well-being as they are on their employees' professional growth. This means that when direct reports approach their managers to discuss mental health issues, these conversations will be handled with support, respect and confidentiality.



## GYMPASS

At Gympass, a corporate wellness platform for mind, body and emotional health, Chief Human Resources Officer Livia Martini believes that consistency, training and empathy are some of the keys to destigmatizing mental health and leading employees toward greater wellness.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

I believe the key to any corporate culture trait is consistency. The more things are done the same way by everyone, the more they become normal and the “norm.” Here at Gympass, we leverage one of our values — leading by example. We ensure leaders do what they would expect others to do and are rewarded for that, both formally in our performance cycle and more informally through culture awards.

Specifically, we have started to talk more openly about mental health — leaders with their teams and in town halls, for example. We have made it a standard that we intentionally ask people, “How are you doing?” in every interaction.

*“We even created an external campaign — “How are you, really?” — to share our mental health challenges and solutions we used to overcome it. As a result, this has allowed us to create a more open dialogue with employees and really check in with one another.”*

- Livia Martini, Chief Human Resources Officer

When someone shares a concern, it is taken seriously and addressed quickly. Managers, HR and individuals should have resources to help others (and themselves). Our goal is to normalize using the product on a preventive basis across our team so that everybody uses it and sees the benefits firsthand.

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

If you want to have a truly caring and welcoming culture, where people feel comfortable talking about mental health issues, you have to take every single conversation very seriously. We have formal channels through which people can reach HR or the most senior leaders at the company, anonymously or not.

## GYMPASS

This allows us to ensure we are creating a safe space for our employees. We keep a very selective group of people who have extensive exposure to sensitive situations in charge of managing these channels. All employees are informed of this and trust these channels.

For managers, they need to be trained on how to handle these situations, but most importantly, they need to be fluent in the resources available. For us, we instruct managers that “when in doubt, come straight to HR for help.” Second, **we give them training to support people on a day-to-day basis and recognize signs of mental health issues — those should be yellow flags that push managers to act or ask for help.** On top of all the training, it is extremely important that as part of your hiring process and your talent development process, you ensure your managers genuinely care about others.



**BRAZE**

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## **BRAZE**

Braze's platform enables businesses to deliver personalized, cross-channel customer experiences in real time. Gretchen Newell, workplace coordinator, at Braze shares how their mental health programs and formal training helps them reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

We have several programs that are designed to help destigmatize conversations surrounding mental health. Our "HealthyMinds@Braze" ERG is dedicated to encouraging mental health discourse and provides check-ins for employees. During these check-ins, which are often in partnership with other ERGs that focus on mental health in their communities, employees are encouraged to speak candidly about their feelings and share a safe space with others. In our dedicated Slack channel, employees can discuss personal mental health journeys and experiences. This encourages team members to learn about and relate to their colleagues, and create a more open dialogue surrounding mental health.

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

We want our employees to feel like they can go to their managers to talk through any challenges they may be facing. Additionally, 24 Braze employees recently went through rigorous training to become Mental Health First Aid-certified in the workplace. Employees worldwide will be able to reach out to any of their MHFA-certified colleagues who have been trained to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance-use disorders. This gives our employees more options when it comes to taking care of their mental health.

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## **NEXTROLL**

At NextRoll, an employee resource group (ERG) focused on mental health helps reduce the stigma around the topic with its workforce. Larissa Licha, chief of staff in product, design, and engineering, is co-president of NextRoll's ERG and shares how open conversations make a big difference.

## **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

Our management team recognizes that mental health is critical to ensuring the well-being of our employees, especially over the past year. In 2019, we formally introduced our mental health ERG, “RollAble.”

We used RollAble to make mental help an integral aspect of our company culture, running several panels, allowing people to share their experiences and hosting a peer program among other things. This ERG gave us the opportunity to normalize mental health and demonstrate its importance in all of our lives. We’ve also been hosting sessions facilitated by experts to address and discuss some of the most significant concerns.





**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

Our people team has been focused on providing managers with tools and resources on how to best approach mental health conversations.

*“The past year signalled a shift in how we perceive wellness, prompting us to hold check-ins with our employees, encourage time off and abide by a no-questions-asked policy when people need a day to reset.”*

- Larissa Licha, Chief of Staff in Product, Design & Engineering

The company also created a self-care guide for both managers and employees that provides virtual tools and resources related to mental health.

We’re currently establishing a formal training series for our managers to ramp up our mental wellness efforts. We also send out a company-wide sentiment survey to employees through Culture Amp that gives our people team a pulse on employees’ well-being. Additionally, we introduced “floating holidays” to encourage employees to take extra time off when they need it.

## ZSCALER

Addressing burnout head on and surveying employees on their needs are just a few ways Allison Doughty, global benefits manager at Zscaler, a security platform that enables businesses to work from anywhere, says the company destigmatizes mental health.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

In 2020, we started sending anonymous pulse surveys targeted around employee health, especially mental health. We have used the information from these surveys to implement new programs and benefits, and we always include a question at the end asking if the employee needs someone to talk to and if they would like someone from the people and culture team to reach out to them.

**It makes a huge difference to do something as simple as reach out and offer time to listen, connect them with resources to help their personal situation and simply make sure they know their company supports them.** In many cases, it gave employees the chance to have less intimidating conversations and realize that other employees may also be reaching out for help.

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

We have provided managers many mental health training sessions throughout the pandemic, covering topics such as how to avoid burnout and how to identify overstressed employees. We also taught managers when to bring an employee mental health situation to the people and culture team. Additionally, we've had employee training sessions related to stress mitigation, mindfulness practices, life coaching, counseling and more.

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## **ACCOLADE**

Britt Provost, EVP of people and culture at Accolade, a health benefits tech company that supports mental health initiatives, shares that it rolled out a partnership with an on-demand mental health service for its customers last year. But first, it implemented the service with its own employees as a proof-of-concept and case study.

## **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

Our company is dedicated to helping people live their healthiest lives, so we especially want our employees to be living their healthiest lives. We know that in order to do this we need to support their mental health as well as their physical, professional and financial health.

To create an environment where our employees feel comfortable having honest conversations around mental health, we've taken a few steps:

- We focused on destigmatizing the topics by having employees and leaders share powerful stories of navigating their own mental health and seeking support or help.
- We leveraged our chief medical officer in communications to educate our employees on the mental health crisis in this country.
- We created an open #wellbeing Slack channel where tools, stories and resources are shared in a weekly post with employees with a 50 percent direct focus on mental health.
- During the pandemic, Accolade rolled out a new emotional support benefit, Ginger, and sponsored free Teladoc general medicine and behavioral health visits.

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

We continuously share resources with leaders about how to proactively check-in with their team on a human level, support employees in navigating various situations, and help them to refer their employees to the many tools and programs Accolade has to offer.



## MATILLION

At Matillion, Vicki Marchington, VP of people ops, shares that it's executive leadership showcases their vulnerability by having an open discussion about the complicated feelings associated with imposter syndrome.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

Our culture at Matillion has always focused heavily on being authentic and transparent. This transparency covers all areas within Matillion, such as challenges at work, offering feedback to each other, business issues and also mental health.

In the past year, we've had two executive "what's on my mind" Zoom meetings; one with a topic of imposter syndrome, delivered by our VP of engineering, and one with a topic of general mental health challenges, delivered by our chief of staff. This openness from the top has allowed others within the organization to feel empowered to share their issues or reach out for help.

**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

It really depends on the severity of the issue. People leaders are empowered to do so if the issue can be addressed through work support, flexible working arrangements or coaching. But if the issue seems more serious, our people ops will guide the manager through the situation with the team, and on rare occasions, the issue will be handed to people ops to step in with medical or more specialized care.

We have created a number of tools and tactics to support managers with different levels of mental health, and our strategy for 2021 includes further development of this as we recognize the challenge of the pandemic and the fact that a return to normal can also bring with it new challenges.



## CIRRUSMD INC.

Dena Grablowsky, strategic human resources consultant, at CirrusMD, a virtual care platform, shares it's cutting their virtual meetings by 25 percent so that everyone can use that extra time on Fridays to close their laptops at 1 p.m., unplug from work and start their weekends early.

### **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

We added a Slack channel called “getting me through” early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees use this channel to share tips, support and ways they’ve been able to deal with pandemic stress and working remotely.

*“We’ve found that this Slack channel has been a great way for people to casually ask for ideas, support and guidance to help them get through these tough times without having to explore a more formal avenue for help. But those avenues are available as well.”*

- Dena Grablowsky, Strategic Human Resources Consultant



**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

Our managers work hard to build relationships to better understand their staff. When employees discuss mental health challenges with their manager, the manager is able to listen and explore if work or other factors are contributing to the issues and if so, managers have full authority to adjust work requirements to best support their team members. Often the manager will provide the EAP contact information, recommend that the employee reach out to one of CirrusMD's behavioral health physicians on confidential chat or reach out to HR to explore ways we can better support the employee.

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## **PIE INSURANCE**

At Denver insurtech company Pie Insurance, Lauri Putt Needleman, head of people and talent, shares it's large swaths of the company breathing a collective "om" from their respective homes in a peer-led yoga class that helps destigmatize mental health in their workplace.

## **How have you created a culture where people feel comfortable having honest conversations about mental health?**

In the past year, our team members have experienced significant stress resulting from traumatic events alongside the entire global community. At Pie, we've responded to these events by providing opportunities for support and connection. We partnered with an organization to facilitate crisis support sessions with a licensed therapist. As a leader, I've shared my own experiences with trauma during these sessions, and found that it created a safe space for others to be vulnerable. We've also recruited Pie yogis to lead virtual yoga sessions and engaged professionals to lead us in guided meditation and mindfulness sessions. We encourage team members to take time off for mental health by providing wellness and gratitude days in addition to our existing paid time-off programs.



**When employees come to their managers to discuss mental health issues, how are those situations handled? Do you provide any training to help managers navigate these conversations?**

All of our team members and leaders are expected to live by our company values, including respect and trust. People leaders are trained to personally check-in with their team members during weekly one-on-one meetings, especially after traumatic events.

*“When our team members have experienced a mental health issue, our leaders respond with respect and compassion while sharing company-sponsored resources such as our employee assistance program and our partnership with mobile therapy company Talkspace.”*

- Lauri Putt Needleman, Head of People & Talent

*\*These interviews originally appeared across our network of eight online communities.*

#### SECTION IV

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# How Companies Can Support Employees' Mental Health

Mental health should always be a priority for companies to strengthen, but given the number of workers who experienced distress during the pandemic it's even more imperative for companies to find ways to support their employees.

# An Employee Perspective

Before getting into the specific ways companies can support their employees' mental health, we thought it was important to share the perspective of employees on this topic.

## Employees Don't Feel Supported

Almost half (47 percent) of employees want mental health support from companies, however, there is some misalignment on whether or not companies are actually succeeding in doing this.

Findings show that 96 percent of company leaders feel they are stepping up to the plate to support employees' mental health, while only 69 percent of employees feel the same way. This disagreement puts employees at risk for getting the support they need.

## Employee Mental Health Support

**96%**

Of company leaders feel they are supporting employees' mental health.

**69%**

Of employees don't feel company leaders are supporting their mental health.

## Mental Health Support Is Not Easy to Come By

While many employees recognize the need for mental health support, not everyone seeks it out. Why? The main reasons employees do not seek out support is because of a lack of affordable care (28 percent), the belief that they do not have the time (27 percent) and a shortage of energy to seek care (21 percent). Companies can play a big role in breaking down some of these barriers for their workforce.

## Mental Health Support Makes Employees More Engaged

Mental wellness is crucial to an individual's overall health and has a tremendous impact on performance in the office. In fact, employees who experience anxiety or depression miss on average 6 more work days each year than those without anxiety or depression.

Studies also show that 57 percent of workers are more loyal, productive and take less time off when employers support their mental well-being. Companies and employees alike benefit from mental health support.

## SECTION IV

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# Ways to Support Employees' Mental Health

The effects of the pandemic on workers mental health will be lasting, it's time for companies to step up to the plate. And it seems companies are starting to.

Almost 70 percent of companies plan to improve or begin offering mental health resources this year. Even more promising is the fact that about half of companies indicated employees' mental health is a top priority for their leaders.

We spoke with five companies to hear how they are supporting employee's mental health. Read on to see how your organization can begin this necessary work today.

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## NEUSTAR

Information technology company Neustar enables trusted connections between companies and people through solutions in marketing, risk communications, security and registry. At the start of the coronavirus pandemic, Neustar implemented a series of guiding principles in order to provide its employees with mental health support, Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President Carey Pellock said.

## **What perks or benefits does your company offer to support employee mental health?**

We will continue to follow the six COVID-19 guiding principles we put in place at the start of the pandemic:

- Keep our people safe and healthy
- Be proactive and decisive
- Seek input and feedback broadly
- Be sure to live our values
- Don't take unnecessary risks
- Be proactive about mental health

These principles, paired with our mental health pillar framework — physical health, relaxation, balance and getting help — have served us well. These foundational systems have and will continue to be our guides to supporting mental health at Neustar.





## **BETTER**

### **When discussing mental health as a company, how do you create a sense of psychological safety and encourage people to speak up if they need support?**

We've tried very hard to change the stigma associated with mental health by naming the components that go into being mentally healthy. We've also talked a lot about mental health. We have a monthly all-hands meeting and it's on the agenda every single month.

***“Another very helpful aspect has been executive engagement. Each of our executive committee members has adopted a mental health pillar and were tasked with finding ways that were authentic to them to engage our people and create a conversation.”***

**- Carey Pellock, Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President**

Finally, our CEO has talked openly about the ways he has worked on his mental health. While these have all started to break down the barriers of a one-time taboo subject, we know that integrating this topic into our culture and being consistent over long periods of time is the only way to truly address mental health.

## UNITY TECHNOLOGIES

Shoua Draeger, Unity's global benefits manager, said the 2D and 3D content creation platform will continue to offer flexible work hours and PTO as part of its holistic approach to supporting employee mental and physical health.

### **What perks or benefits does your company offer to support employee mental health?**

We are taking a holistic wellness approach, which includes improving our mental health resources and access to care, as well as enhancing our wellness perks so that employees have more creative options for physical wellness.



**When discussing mental health as a company, how do you create a sense of psychological safety and encourage people to speak up if they need support?**

We constantly remind employees that we have an employee assistance program for them and their dependents, as well as other mental health benefits. We've also hosted several open talk sessions with all employees and had great participation. We have several Slack channels created by employees to support each other, and we have employee resource groups as another safe and open space for employees to join for community support.

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## **BETTER**

Using its proprietary technology, Better.com aims to fix the broken homeownership system by removing the middleman and any unnecessary charges and fees. To help support mental health and well-being, Better.com offers employees a work-from-home stipend so they can purchase supplies to make their home office as inviting as possible, Senior Benefits Manager Kara Benton-Smith said.

**BETTER**

## **What perks or benefits does your company offer to support employee mental health?**

Benefits and perks are plentiful here at Better.com! Some include telehealth counseling services, employee assistance programs (EAPs), virtual workouts, yoga, cooking classes, and more to ensure employees' mental health is well supported.

However, Better has committed to offering perks and benefits that specifically speak to the mental strain many are experiencing during this unprecedented time.

These include programs like virtual physical therapy to ensure needed rehabilitation is not interrupted, and a work-from-home stipend so our employees can still enjoy lunch on us and get the supplies they need to make their workspace at home as inviting as possible.

**For our working parents, Better Birds is our virtual activities program for children 10 years old and younger to help support parents while they balance work, virtual schooling and parenting at home.** In 2021, we will be partnering with Spring Health for a more personalized approach to mental health support.



**When discussing mental health as a company, how do you create a sense of psychological safety and encourage people to speak up if they need support?**

I think what is amazing about the culture at Better is that the conversation about mental health and well-being is simply one that we are always having and encouraging our employees to have. For example, ensuring our colleagues in California are safe and aware of the support afforded to them due to the recent wave of wildfires, or providing tips for all employees on how to avoid burnout before it hits.

Additionally, we have made an effort to foster a safe space to have conversations on social issues, including the launch of our ongoing racial equity speaker series that discusses the causes and effects of racial inequity on our employees most vulnerable to racial injustice.

*“Overall, Better is focused on supporting the whole employee. We strive to be a safe space for employees to speak up, be heard and know that support is just a click away.”*

- Kara Benton-Smith, Senior Benefits Manager



**...As companies and HR leaders look ahead, we're going to see a much bigger emphasis on the human skills of resilience and stress management. It's especially important because the pandemic has accelerated a mental health crisis that existed long before anyone had heard of COVID-19. The companies that put resilience and mental health on the front burner and really apply the lessons of the pandemic are going to be the ones that win the future."**

**-ALISON TERCEK, HEAD OF PEOPLE AT THRIVE GLOBAL**

## **CARGURUS**

CarGurus tries to be proactive in addressing employee mental health, encouraging new hires, experienced managers and everyone in between to carve out time for themselves and support each other going into the colder winter months. “We know there is a lot impacting our wellbeing right now, and we’re continuing to reinforce to our broader community that it’s OK to not be OK all the time,” Chief People Officer Andrea Eldridge said.

### **What perks or benefits does your company offer to support employee mental health?**

CarGurus offers several perks that specifically focus on improving and prioritizing our mental health and wellbeing. **For example, all employees have free access to Headspace, the mindfulness meditation app, where they can choose from hundreds of themed sessions tailored to their needs.** We also have an employee assistance program that’s available to support employees and their families through uncertain times, providing consultative services, customized resources, connections to community resources and more.

## CARGURUS

New in 2020, we introduced a handful of mental health days (in addition to our existing holiday calendar) to encourage our teams to disconnect and recharge.

Most recently, we celebrated World Mental Health Day in October. In addition to the extra day off, we provided a variety of mental health-focused, on-demand resources and programs. These included an employee-led yoga class, a fireside chat conversation with a local mental health advocate, e-learning courses through our company-wide LinkedIn Learning subscription, and a library of related videos and articles.

Occasional observances and holidays are great reminders to prioritize our mental health and wellbeing. But these resources encourage and empower us to invest in and prioritize our mental health every day.





## **When discussing mental health as a company, how do you create a sense of psychological safety and encourage people to speak up if they need support?**

While our circumstances may be different, everyone deserves to be treated with empathy, respect and compassion. We have several active Slack channels that nurture connectedness and community. These spaces enable and encourage employees —whether broadly or in sub-groups that focus on shared identities and experiences — to share stories, offer tips and resources, encourage each other, and bring back the sense of connection we share in the office.

***“We’re lucky to have an engaged and supportive community that understands the importance of extending compassion and respect as we continue to navigate these uncertain times. We’re in this together.”***

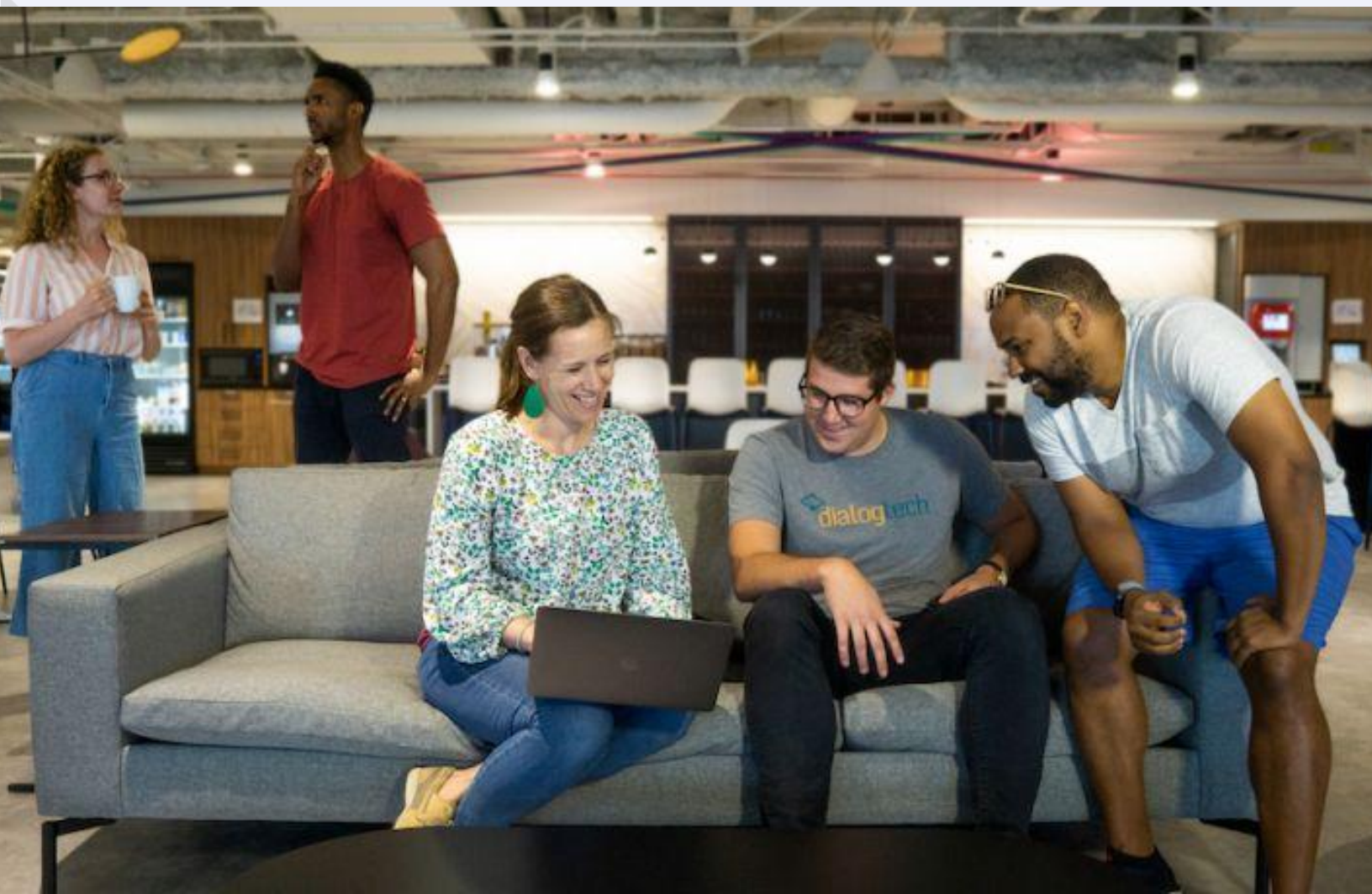
**- Andrea Eldridge, Chief People Officer**

DIALOGTECH

## DIALOGTECH

Amy Dolan, VP of People and Culture at call analytics platform DialogTech said they are leaning on informal chats outside of normal meetings, regular pulse surveys and other communication methods to stay aware of how employees are doing, and how leadership can help.

*Image via DialogTech*



## **What perks or benefits does your company offer to support employee mental health?**

We encourage every employee to take three “mental health hours” a week for themselves. Team members can schedule this time to do a workout, go for a walk, step away from the screen or do anything they wish. We promote this time as a way to prioritize mental well-being.

***“DialogTech also offers flexible working hours; we encourage each employee to determine the schedule that works best for them. Whether this flexibility is needed to support working parents or it’s helpful to one’s mental health and personal schedule, our team members know their needs best, and we’re here to support them.”***

**- Amy Dolan, VP of People and Culture**

Some other perks include a corporate ClassPass membership with virtual courses for mindfulness and exercise and weekly virtual social hangouts to promote team bonding. We’re continuously brainstorming and researching creative new ways to support our team’s mental well-being during this time.

## **When discussing mental health as a company, how do you create a sense of psychological safety and encourage people to speak up if they need support?**

Since the pandemic began, we implemented bimonthly pulse surveys to solicit honest feedback on how remote work was going, what employees needed, challenges they were experiencing and ideas for new ways to support each other.

***“We held regular all-staff meetings where everyone was encouraged to ask questions and surface concerns either directly to our leadership team or via an anonymous form.”***

***- Amy Dolan, VP of People and Culture***

We’re planning a mental health webinar for our team this winter hosted by NAMI Chicago, which is an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and a partner of ours. Our partnership was inspired by the important work NAMI Chicago provides to the Chicago community.

*\*These interviews originally appeared across our network of eight online communities.*

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