



EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

August 2023



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

Presentation Skills for Supervisors

When: October 16, 2023 at 1:00 PM CDT

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THE EFFECTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESSORS IN THE WORKPLACE (PART 3)

Psychological Stressors at Work: How Employers Can Respond (cont.)

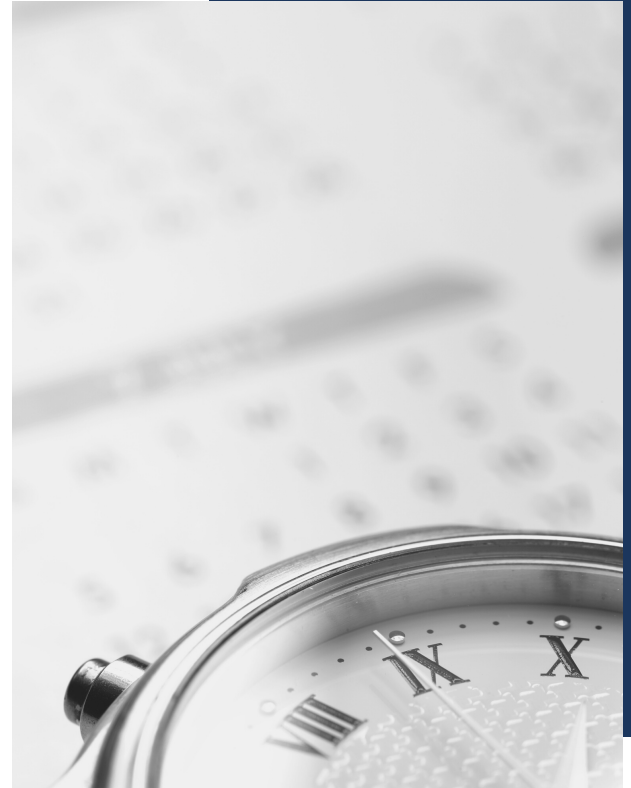
Offer flexibility.

Another key aspect of the workplace that employees would like to see technology leveraged toward is flexibility; growing research shows that over 80 percent of all workers would choose a job that offers a flexible schedule over one that does not. Now more than ever before, employees are searching for jobs that provide them the option to work from home either all of the time or some of the time, while even more are looking for employers that will be understanding and accommodating when it comes to other responsibilities that may sometimes pull them out of work, such as child care, elder care, and medical appointments. While there are some jobs that simply can't be performed efficiently under remote or hybrid working models, employers should seriously look into whether any changes to the current schedule can be made, such as switching to a four-day workweek model or even simply allowing more breaks, paid sick leave, or days off. By offering more flexible and lenient schedules, employers can ensure that employees can take the time that they need to adequately rest and get a break from work, which will allow them to both recover from stress and prevent it from accruing.

By leveraging technology to support flexibility at work, employers can also help remote workers feel more connected to their team through digital applications, like Slack or Teams, and improve employees' access to perks and benefits offered by their employer, including digital coaching and telehealth benefits, by ensuring that workers have multiple avenues to access support besides in-person care.^{1,2}

Expand benefits offerings, subsidies; implement wellness initiatives or programs.

The most important step that employers can take to reduce stress and improve their workers' wellbeing is expanding or enhancing current benefits offering. According to new research from Randstad, less than half of white- and blue-collar workers are currently satisfied with the level of health and wellness



support they receive from their employers.³ This statistic is especially troubling for blue-collar workers, whose income generally bar them from accessing high-quality health care—including emergency medical care that their line of work puts them at greater need for—and whose socioeconomic backgrounds pose significantly more barriers to health compared to those of their white-collar counterparts.

Thankfully, however, experts note that there are several overlaps in the types of benefits that would best support both white- and blue-collar workers. Survey data consistently shows that extensive health care coverage and annual health credits (i.e. gym membership subsidies) are the most important health and wellness benefits among both sectors⁴; specifically, fully-insured health plans with little to no-deductibles and with 100 percent of premiums covered by employers that include comprehensive mental health coverage and virtual care options, and benefits-based incentives that allow employees to earn extra paid time off (PTO) and stipends.⁵

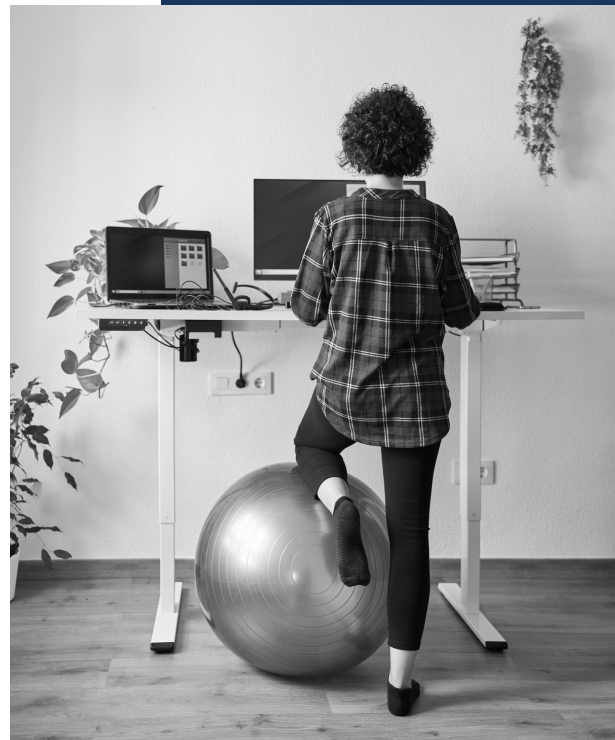
Aside from health insurance plans, the best perk that employers can offer to reduce employees' workplace stress is access to wellness programs. According to research from the Kaiser Family Foundation, 98 percent of all large employers (200+ employees) and nearly three-quarters of smaller firms offer at least one wellness program, including weight loss, smoking cessation, nutrition and healthy living, and personal health workshops; on-site exercise facilities or gym memberships; yoga, meditation, and fitness classes⁶; and smaller but effective incentives, like offering complimentary healthy snacks and providing access to on-site water coolers.⁷

Study findings show that there are two main wellness objectives that employers should prioritize depending on if they work in white- or blue-collar industries: (1) improving physical activity—specifically, changing sedentary behavior—for white-collar workers, and (2) promoting healthier lifestyle habits—with a focus on nutrition and substance use—for blue-collar workers.⁸

In order to help white-collar workers—especially those working remotely—improve their physical health, employers can consider providing employees with subsidies for standing desks, under-desk ellipticals⁹ and bikes,¹⁰ balance boards,¹¹ and wearable fitness devices¹² to try to reduce the time that these workers spend completely sedentary, while still being able to get work done. In fact, allowances for home office equipment—including exercise and fitness gear—have been ranked as the second-most important health and wellness benefit that white-collar workers say they look for when looking for a new job.¹³

For blue-collar workers, wellness programs should focus on goals such as weight management, smoking and tobacco cessation, limiting alcohol consumption, and maintaining a balanced diet. For instance, in order to support clients in the trucking industry, Dr. Steve Aldana, Founder and CEO of WellSteps, developed the Stop and Go Fast Food Nutrition Guide (also available as an app for Apple and Google devices),¹⁴ a free tool that helps truckers to find healthier food options while on the road, which is historically a challenge for these workers given the pervasive fast-food culture.¹⁵

Additionally, wellness programs targeted toward blue-collar workers should focus on effectively promoting offerings and creating incentives for them to participate. Given the nature of their jobs—long hours, physical labor, and dangerous work environments that require extensive concentration—blue-collar workers are shown to be less likely to engage in programs—specifically, virtual programs—as they do not have the time to see what's available online or on their phones.⁵ That said, it's important for blue-collar employers to prioritize simple, on-site wellness programs. This includes having those water coolers,



on-site kitchens or kitchenettes, vending machines with healthy food options, and free snacks. It also includes hosting in-person wellness workshops or seminars that all staff are required to attend; providing on-site access to gyms, studios, or exercise rooms; organizing on-site flu and other vaccine clinics; and disseminating interactive print outs or worksheets that workers can fill out throughout the day to ensure that they are meeting daily health and wellness goals.⁵

Still, given the uncertainty or inflexibility of their working hours, blue-collar workers—like their white-collar counterparts—still benefit from virtual care options, including online doctor consultations,¹⁶ online wellness platforms, virtual wellness workshops or coaching, and access to online health and wellness education courses. In order to provide such perks, leaders should consider investing in employee assistance programs (EAPs)¹⁷ and collaborating with both on- and off-site wellness coordinators to determine how to best promote resources and to determine which services and resources would be most beneficial to their employees.

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HOLISTIC WELLNESS AT WORK: BENEFITS

Benefits of Holistic, Personalized Care

While employers should strive to provide more targeted and individualized support to their workers simply because that's what's best for their employees,¹ there are plenty of benefits that such support offers to the organization that employers may also want to consider when it comes to implementing these solutions, including:

- **Improved retention rates**—While research from Mercer finds that poor support makes it significantly more likely that an employee will want to leave their job, posing reputational, business continuity, and operational risks to their employer,² new research from the Brandon Hall Group has found that investing in more versatile and holistic wellbeing support can lead to a 67 percent increase in retention rate—and even a 35 percent increase in customer retention.³ Employers may also have an easier time recruiting new talent as well, as prospective employees will want to work for the organizations that view them as whole people and who value their holistic wellbeing.
- **Reduction in burnout**—By investing in holistic wellbeing solutions, employers can also ensure that their workers have access to the support needed to address any of the concerns they have that may be contributing to increased levels of stress—such as mental, emotional, or physical fatigue; financial insecurity; loneliness, isolation, or poor social support—in order to prevent or alleviate burnout. In fact, additional findings from the Brandon Hall Group showed that investing in holistic wellbeing solutions lead to a near 50 percent decrease in burnout.
- **Increased engagement; greater profitability**—Research from Gallup has consistently shown that employee engagement and wellbeing are reciprocal⁴; while new studies reveal that more than half of employees believe that the state of their wellbeing has a direct impact on their level of productivity. According to findings from the Brandon Hall Group, by investing in more comprehensive and microtargeted wellbeing support, employers can increase their employee engagement by a whopping 81 percent, increasing their overall worker output and leading to a 24 percent growth in profitability.⁵



Therefore, as comprehensive, flexible, and personalized benefits continue to become the most sought-after wellness perks⁷, employers looking to retain talent or attract new talent would be wise to take a hard look at their own benefits package and determine how they can better expand it and ensure that it reflects and targets the needs of their workers, and provides the versatile, affirmative, and empowering support they need.

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This article was excerpted from the Workplace Options (WPO) Blog post, "Holistic, Personalized Care for Employees: What it Means, Why it's Important, and What it Looks Like" at <https://www.workplaceoptions.com/holistic-personalized-care-for-employees-what-it-means-why-its-important-and-what-it-looks-like>.

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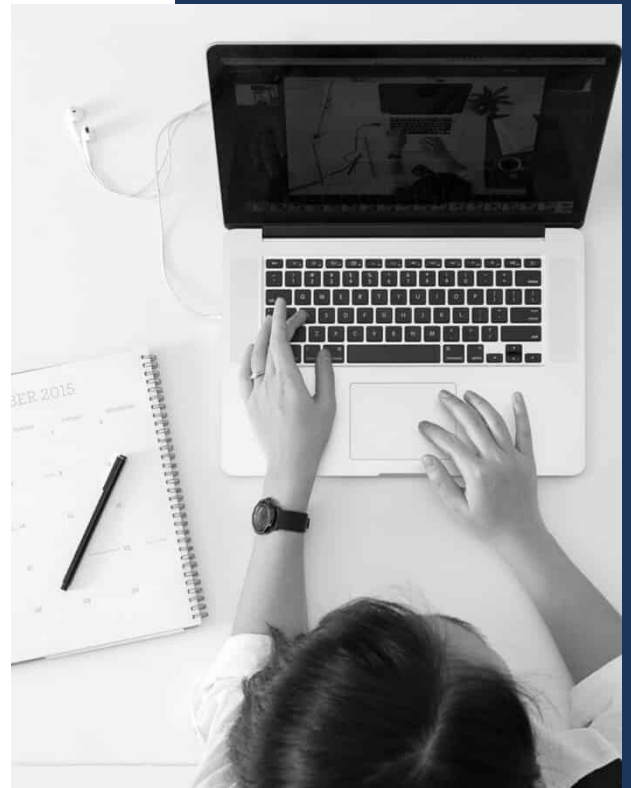
ASK YOUR EAP!

Q. As a new supervisor, I have no concerns about being respected or directing others. My concern is not meeting the expectations of management and my higher-ups. My anxiety is causing me to make mistakes, forget things, and creating fear of the boom being lowered on me!

A. Certainly anxiety can affect performance, but there are several steps you can take to overcome it: 1) Develop a clear understanding of the goals, expectations, priorities, and essential functions of your job. Overlooking this is the most common reason for anxiety among new supervisors (and new employees in general). Meet with your supervisor so you are clear on these issues. 2) Be proactive in asking for feedback. Anxiety can make you hesitant to seek the views of others, but that information will bring you the relief of being in sync with your supervisor's expectations. 3) Always know your team's progress, challenges, and successes. Discover the most suitable way of regularly communicating with management about these metrics. 4) Don't allow the days to pass without having a written, detailed plan for how you will meet the needs and expectations of your position. Without it, you will feel rudderless while fighting fire after fire, and you will continue to worry about where to focus your energy. 5) Finally, reach out to the EAP for help.

Q. My employee has a few performance issues, and I need to make a referral to the EAP, but he is stubborn and tends to intellectualize. Can the EAP really make progress with someone whose personality style is so defensive?

A. If your employee values his job, it's likely that progress will be made in getting the changes you want and need for the organization. Remember, your formal referral is not a casual act. It is based on performance; therefore, you must communicate that change is expected and non-negotiable. A signed release is important to ensure appropriate, ongoing feedback to you. If you communicate this sufficiently, the employee's motivation will be easier for the EAP to manage, despite his ego and his resistant attitude. The employee assistance professional won't engage your employee in a counseling process that only serves as an intellectual exercise. More likely the approach will be solution-focused and include important elements that allow him to understand how this personality style is creating roadblocks that stand in the way of change. EAPs are very experienced with the wide variety of personalities of employees who seek help for personal problems.



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