

2021

Guide to Wellbeing at Work



motivosity

2021 Wellbeing at Work Checklist

What does the research say about what humans need? Deloitte conducted a study that focused primarily on what people will require to feel human at work, and therefore improve their mental wellbeing. They boiled it down to three basic human needs: Trust, Safety and Connection. Here is your checklist to achieve this (p.s keep reading for more detail and research on each):

What your organization's leadership can do for your company

- Increase access to mental health resources
- Consider a drastic change to overall company flexibility
- Destigmatize mental health struggles from the top
- Utilize a recognition software platform
- Be transparent about your company's financial position

What your managers can do for their employees

- Express appreciation for their team members
- Offer appropriate levels of flexibility
- Communicate frequently and consistently
- Set, model, and respect boundaries
- Offer casual connection opportunities

What HR can do for your teams

- Contract with third-party resources
- Wellness and restoration sessions or app access
- Rubber wristband system
- Budget for home equipment
- Publicize anonymous mental health resources

What your employees can do for themselves and each other

- Log off
- Commit to a routine
- Give thanks
- Invest in a work friendship
- Ask for help when you need it`

The Covid-19 pandemic has had disastrous effects on the human beings of this world. While the normalization of mental health problems and solutions has gained momentum in recent years, the virus exacerbated present struggles around wellbeing and introduced many to the claws of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and stress for the first time.

[A recent study](#) cross-examined data from China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the US, Turkey, Nepal, and Denmark. The numbers revealed that wellbeing has plummeted during the pandemic. Symptoms of anxiety increased from 6.33% to 50.9%. Depression increased from 14.6% to 48.3%. PTSD increased from 7% to 53.8%, and stress rose from 8.1% to 81.9%.

To put it bluntly, we are now dealing with an international mental health crisis.

Luckily this doesn't have anything to do with work, right? Wrong.

These numbers are from the general population. New variants of the coronavirus are continuing to plague nations worldwide, and some nations are facing the [highest level of strain on the healthcare system and a number of cases](#) since the beginning of the pandemic. Even if your country or state had reopened, you may find yourself back in lockdown with all the headaches and sacrifices associated with that.

This puts the employee experience - the one that is highly related to productivity, retention, and profit - in jeopardy as companies navigate a continued remote work situation. Additionally, many of your employees are parents or caregivers with children who have sudden remote learning requirements to manage. The line between work and life has never been more blurred, and the balance between the two is highly at-risk.

While [remote work can actually increase productivity](#) when done right, it can also leave your employees [feeling disconnected and unappreciated](#). As a result, over a fifth of

respondents to [PWC's latest workforce pulse survey](#) reported that the following aspects of their work have gotten worse since the start of the pandemic:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Ability to disconnect
- Work-life balance
- Workload

At Motivosity, we aren't asking you to choose between fostering your employees' wellbeing and financially thriving as an organization. We know that focusing on meeting the human needs of your employees will drive gains across the various metrics that usually measure company performance. It's a win-win. But failure to address wellbeing at your company is a lose-lose. It's frankly not an option for a successful company in 2021.

So, what can you do?



What every human needs

What does the research say about what humans need? Deloitte conducted a study that focused primarily on what people will require to feel human at work, especially in the face of a pandemic and social unrest. They boiled it down to three basic human needs:

- 1. Trust**
- 2. Safety**
- 3. Connection**

Additionally, that international study that identified so many increases in mental health symptoms also named several risk factors

that may help us identify and support the most vulnerable in our workplace:

- *Loneliness*
- *Poor sleep habits*
- *Lower self-rating of overall health*
- *Chronic illness*
- *Being female*
- *Being 40 or younger*
- *High engagement with social media*

The recommendations that follow consider these human needs and risk factors to offer actionable steps your employees, your managers, and your highest level of organizational leadership can take immediately to improve wellbeing at your company today.

What your organization's leadership can do for your company

1. Increase access to mental health resources

If your company does not already offer mental health benefits as part of your health package, now is the time to add them. Whether you offer twelve free telehealth therapist visits to every employee or hold webinars on mental health topics, these moves will show your employees that you care about their wellbeing. The cost to you may not even be a cost at all because [better mental health is connected to productivity gains](#).

2. Consider a drastic change to overall company flexibility

With kids needing to log on to their own Zoom sessions for school, grocery deliveries arriving

throughout the day, and interruptions thanks to a work environment shared by others, your employees need flexibility more than ever. Bret Starr, CEO of The Starr Company, realized that his organization needed to make some drastic changes. They implemented a [90-minute block of quiet, guaranteed free-of-work-contact time](#) in the middle of each day. In addition to lunch, this allowed employees three hours to “flow on projects or take care of things that were stressing [them] out.” They also moved to a four-day work-week. Since 58% of employees report they are working harder than ever, burn-out is imminent. Implementing serious changes like this, along with an expectation to continue to deliver the best quality work, will help ease the burden on your employees to protect their wellbeing and your turnover risk.

3. Destigmatize mental health struggles from the top

Even if your company provides access to mental health resources, your employees may not feel comfortable utilizing them. They may worry about their manager's view of their competence or promotability in the future if they admit their struggles. Making the use of your resources anonymous may increase their utilization, but highlighting the struggles of people in top leadership positions may alleviate these concerns altogether. Roche Genentech did just this by promoting "mental health champions" in their [#Let'sTalk campaign](#). Senior leadership made videos discussing their mental health experiences to remove the stigma. Consider implementing such a campaign for your organization if your resources are being underused.

4. Utilize a recognition software platform

Scott Johnson, founder of [Motivosity](#), quoted research findings that, "More than 74% of employees indicated that their mental health is tied to how well they feel appreciated at work. Successful employers will have a meaningful plan to address that." One way to make gratitude a consistent value across your organization is to adopt a recognition software platform.

Motivosity's Recognize platform allows for public recognition and cash awards to be given from managers to employees and between peers; it also integrates with the systems you are already using: Slack, Microsoft Teams, and your HRIS system. With this system in place, you don't just have to tell your managers to recognize and thank their employees - you can offer them a tool to make it easy and trackable.

5. Be transparent about your company's financial position

Much of your employees' anxiety and stress during this time of uncertainty comes from being afraid they will lose their job. If your employees are still virtual, or some of your employees are virtual, they are not seeing and hearing their leaders every day. They are not attending the meetings or viewing the bulletin board with the company's financial successes. The best thing you can do to earn the trust of your employees is to be transparent about the health of your organization. A weekly newsletter with updates on your financial position plans to overcome challenges, and your vision for moving forward could go a long way to ease people's fears. If you're able, a formal commitment to no layoffs for the next six months would give your employees a big boost of confidence in their workplace and future there.

What your managers can do for their employees

1. Express appreciation for their team members

Remote workers, in particular, have been feeling the rub of working more than ever [without receiving the positive feedback](#) that should result from that extra effort. 79% said that knowing they were appreciated would boost their mental health. 71% said the words they wanted to hear were simply, "Thank you." Gallup's employee

engagement questions include whether or not your employee has received recognition or praise for doing good work. Though giving your employees the appreciation they deserve is important any time, it is essential when anxiety, stress, and depression are knocking at the door. Schedule time at the beginning or end of each week to send thank-you emails to your team. Be specific and authentic. Sweeping generalizations like, "You're the best are cheap. "We couldn't

have done 'x' without your expertise" is more genuine and satisfying. Take the time to thank your team and reap the rewards of happier, more productive employees.

2. Offer appropriate levels of flexibility

Employees who are offered flexible hours to address their new challenges feel trusted. They feel like you believe they want to do a great job and are willing to adjust enough to help them succeed. Here are a few ways you can offer flexibility that should decrease stress and increase motivation on your team:

- Schedule meetings at times that work well across time-zones when your remote employees are no longer in the same area
- Offer a later log-on time for team members who worked late finishing up that important project the night before
- Adjust expectations for facetime hours for employees working through their childcare responsibilities
- Implement a time-block where your team can count on no interruptions

3. Communicate frequently and consistently

Communication and collaboration issues ranked with loneliness as the [top complaint of remote workers](#). It's just easier to talk to people when you are in closer proximity. But your employees are still going to have questions for you - perhaps, even more, when they can't casually check with their neighbor about when that next project is due or what the newest priority is. Plus, working from home is lonely. Your boss isn't as visible to you, and you may start to feel like you are invisible to your boss. To prevent this, make sure that you are setting consistent and frequent intervals for feedback. Remote workers ranked more feedback on their role as the number one thing they want from their bosses, even more than additional compensation! So schedule

1 on 1s at least monthly, make sure timelines or resources are regularly updated on a Slack channel everyone has access to, and set a time for a brief daily check-in with your team to make sure everyone has a chance to ask questions and get on the same page.

4. Set, model, and respect boundaries

Stick to the regular times you've set for team check-ins and meetings. Don't make your team feel like they're always on call, especially before or after set work hours. Many employees feel pressure to answer emails even when they are watching a movie with their family at 9 pm. Encourage employees to set appropriate cut-off times and model doing so yourself. Finally, don't make them feel like you need to be involved in every little dimension of their work process. Micromanaging your team will hurt your relationship and make them feel like you don't trust them. Instead, give your team the freedom to do their best work.

5. Offer casual connection opportunities

Humans are social beings. We crave interaction and connection. Psychologically, [social exclusion can cause feelings of physical pain](#). On the other hand, connection [reduces stress and worry and increases pleasure and trust](#). In the workplace, people with social connections are more engaged, productive, and have a lower mortality rate! But authentic connections are complicated in a pandemic. Companies have done well in scheduling Zoom lunches or happy hours, but when you're on a screen all day, these activities become less and less appealing. Instead, find ways to incorporate casual but fun social interactions in natural ways. Sponsor a work fantasy sports league, dedicate a Slack channel to funny GIFs, or start a wellness challenge with prizes for people who reach out to others, get outside to exercise, or share recipes with colleagues. As local safety guidelines and

personal safety concerns evolve, providing a budget for in-person interests also makes sense. If your team is comfortable, an in-person lunch might be possible. If not, a socially-distanced, outdoor activity might be the perfect connection opportunity.



What HR can do for your teams

1. Contract with third-party resources

With school closures and at-risk relatives staying home, many of your employees have been forced to take a second job as caregiver without much warning or preparation. This has increased anxiety, stress, and a desire to leave or decrease their work responsibilities - especially for women. Covid-days and paid leave are great, but what your people really need is a way to manage their new situation. [Contracting with third parties](#) that provide childcare, grocery delivery, financial planning, and medical care coordination is a great place to start. Helping your employees find ways to consistently alleviate some of their responsibility-load will offer them a sustainable new normal.

2. Wellness and restoration sessions or app access

Hiring a massage therapist to come to the office or building an on-site fitness center are no longer particularly viable options for offering wellness to employees during the pandemic. However, if your main goal is the utilization of wellness resources, you can hold yoga sessions over Zoom, offer discounts to participate in local fitness activities, or provide complimentary access to wellness apps that provide mindfulness meditation, better sleep, workouts, or nutrition tips.

3. Rubber wristband system

As local guidelines allow, some employees may return to the office and feel comfortable resuming some in-person activities. [A rubber wristband system](#) can help you identify where your employees fall on the spectrum of comfort any given week. Red wristbands would signal that a person is strictly distancing, yellow that someone is fine talking but not touching, and green would be someone ready to high-five the team. Coworkers should respect and accommodate each viewpoint, and having this visual can help you gauge what type of activity would promote connection while still feeling safe. You might find that an outdoor sports activity or distanced bonfire would help people feel human, normal, but protected. If you notice several green wristbands around the office, you may be able to schedule a recurring in-person lunch to promote the vital human connections we all need.

4. Budget for home equipment

For those who are temporarily or permanently remote, access to the right home resources is necessary. Offering a budget for computer monitors, desks, comfortable office chairs, noise-canceling headphones, and high-speed internet access may be vital to the success of remote work efforts. Once the funds have been allocated

and spent, you could even hold a contest for the best home workspace featuring photos from your employees in a special newsletter.

5. Publicize anonymous mental health resources

It doesn't matter how great your mental health resources are if people at your company don't know how to use them. Consider a publicity campaign to highlight your best offerings. If you have a relationship with Doctor on Demand

or another app that offers counseling sessions from home, highlight the process of downloading and using the program in a way that is connected only to your health benefits. If you offer anonymous self-assessments, publicize that. Create a toolkit that is linked through multiple channels so that employees can easily access the resources they need without having to ask questions of you or their manager. People will utilize their resources more if they can do so without drawing attention from others at the company.

What your employees can do for themselves and each other

1. Log off

The hours that employees gain from not having to commute are often put right back into work. Work-life and home life blur together when you wake up in your "office." It might feel natural to respond to those emails or sneak in a little more work on that project when you would normally be taking time for yourself by exercising, watching a show, or spending time with loved ones and friends. Force yourself to log off completely. Take your vacation days. You might find it especially difficult to do this when you are most stressed when your mental health is in a state of distress. But taking time for yourself when you are at your worst is an important intervention and coping skill. Taking time for yourself and sticking to your boundaries when things are going well can help prevent the burnout that the hardest workers are constantly facing.

2. Commit to a routine

There are simple things you can do to boost your mood and show up in your best mental

state every day. You know that you are getting up only to log on to your computer. You know that you could probably survive the day without putting on pants. You know that you could get away from working straight from your bed. But don't. Trick yourself into "going to work." Shower. Put on your comfy but nicer work clothes. Move to your dedicated workspace. Spend half an hour around lunch-time taking your daily walk or calling your mom. Log off at your usual time. Eat dinner at the table. Attend that virtual book-club on Wednesdays. These types of behaviors, especially when done consistently, can help you feel productive and boost your self-esteem. When so much around the world is out of your control, try to organize your time and keep yourself engaged in the kind of life you want.

3. Give thanks

The hours that employees gain from not having to commute are often put right back into work. Work-life and home life blur together when you wake up in your "office." It might feel natural to respond to those emails or sneak in a little more

work on that project when you would normally be taking time for yourself by exercising, watching a show, or spending time with loved ones and friends. Force yourself to log off completely. Take your vacation days. You might find it especially difficult to do this when you are most stressed when your mental health is in a state of distress. But taking time for yourself when you are at your worst is an important intervention and coping skill. Taking time for yourself and sticking to your boundaries when things are going well can help prevent the burnout that the hardest workers are constantly facing.

4. Invest in a work friendship

We are not meant to live remotely. Humans need connection and positive relationships. But just because you can't chat with your favorite teammate while grabbing coffee or lunch, doesn't mean you can't nurture your friendship. Choose a work friend to maintain a casual relationship with. Call them to catch-up, send them something funny, or express sincere appreciation for something great they've done lately for the team. Two of [Gallup's twelve](#)

[employee engagement questions](#) have to do with either having a "best friend" or someone who cares about you at work. Investing in this relationship is good for both of you.

5. Ask for help when you need it`

Most of us wouldn't try to fix a broken bone or pneumonia by ourselves, but we try to manage our stress, anxiety, depression, or PTSD alone. Don't. Seek help through your company's benefits - more and more are including mental health services as standard. If you need accommodations to do your best work, talk to your manager. Thanks to the stress of a pandemic and social unrest around the world, more people than ever are experiencing mental distress first hand. If you can, be open about how your medications may affect your work hours or your need to take a mental health day. If your direct manager doesn't know how to help you, reach out to HR. Know that you have value at your company and advocate for the help you need to do your best work.

Whether the changes you need to make need to happen at a personal, managerial, or company-wide level, it has never been more important for companies to support the wellbeing of their people. Humans do need trust, safety, and connection to thrive. Implementing these ideas should help your teams thrive, even in the most difficult circumstances.

