

Staff Mental Health and Wellness

Madeira City Schools Planning Commission

April 2021

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Purpose:

The goal of this group was to gather the best practices to promote staff wellness and positive mental health among educators. To further elaborate, within a school setting, how can we help support our staff through regular programming and opportunities that prioritize mental health as well as in times of trauma, expanded duties, and increased pressures? In addition, what are businesses doing to promote healthy employees?

The framework for this study:

The framework for this study is based upon the guidance taken from several resources on how to create and/or enhance a mental health and wellness program for students.^{1,2,3} So for this study, we are applying this same guidance to propose a Wellness Program for the staff.

As it applies to this study, the five steps required to create a Wellness Program for the staff are: Identify, Assess, Promote, Support and Share.¹ Listed below for each step is the action item(s) which must be completed in order to successfully develop the Wellness Program. To accomplish the goals established for this group, the group will focus on adding content to the third step: *Promote*.

Identity: “Identify a Wellness Champion within the school system who is passionate about mental (and physical) health”.¹

Assess: “What services exist and what are lacking or absent?”¹

- Jessica Hunter presented to this group a list of all the services and activities relevant to this study which are being offered to the Madeira staff.
- Brady Bowles interviewed Chris Flanigan to gain some further understanding of the on-going activities at the elementary school
- Cara Kuester interviewed Niki Huelsman to gain some further understanding of the on-going activities at the middle school.

Promote: “Identify which practices to promote: which are needed in the school and which practices is the school willing to promote?”¹

- A blueprint for a Wellness Improvement Plan and a Madeira staff wellness web page and ways to reduce the stigma related to mental and physical health.
- Activities, regular programming and opportunities available to maintain and promote positive mental health.
- Madeira overcoming/preventing.
- Best practices for maintaining a healthy work/life balance
- Promoting positive physical health.
- What are businesses doing to promote healthy employees?

Support: To build and gain support for the Wellness Program from both the community and administration. This support also includes funding.

Share: Share the assessment, funding and achievements of the Wellness Program with the staff and community. **GET THE WORD OUT! CELEBRATE!**

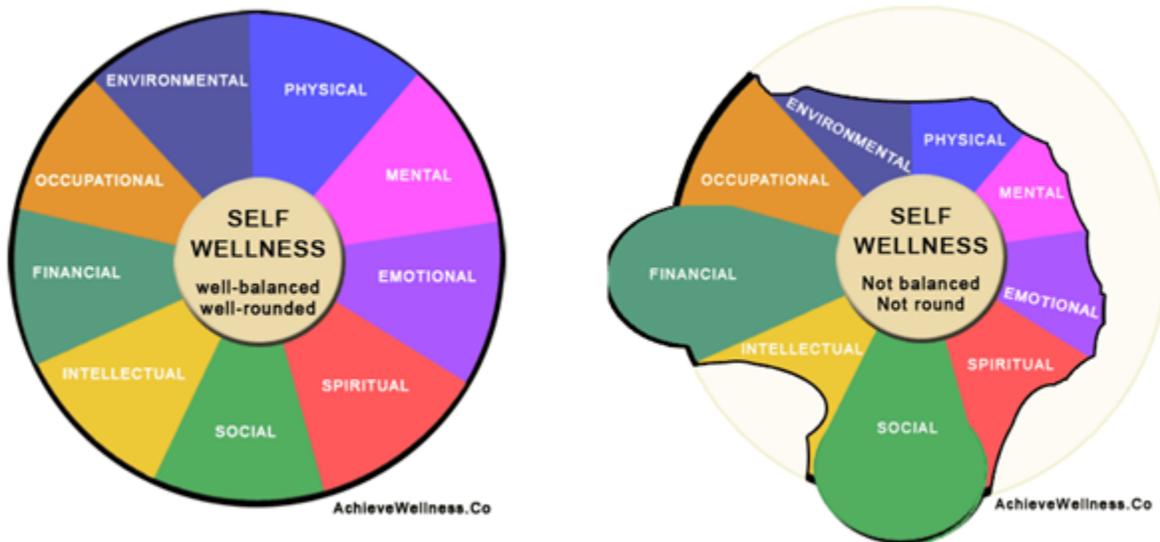
Adding content to the third step, Promote:

---A blueprint for a Wellness Improvement Plan and a Madeira staff wellness web page and ways to reduce the stigma related to mental and physical health.

The foundation of the Wellness Program rests upon a Wellness Improvement Plan, where the Wellness Improvement Plan contains several teams, goals, benchmarks and timelines. For example:

- Establishing a Wellness Team at each building which consists of teachers, staff and administration.
- The function of the team is to determine the who, what, when, where and how. For example:
 - Which areas of wellness found within the “Self-Wellness” wheel (on the left) require the most attention?¹ (Figure 1)
 - Determining what programs and activities are needed to bring about a positive change to the chosen areas of wellness.

Figure 1: “Self-Wellness” wheel



- Implementing the programs and activities.
- Receiving feedback via surveys to determine which programs and activities are making a positive impact.
- Reporting the results of the surveys to the staff and administration.
- Periodically reviewing and making adjustments to the teams, goals, programs, activities, and timelines.

As part of this program, it is important that all information related to the Wellness Program is available, and continuously updated, on a proposed blueprint for a Madeira staff wellness web page.

- The following could be included is this web page:
 - All on-going programs, activities, training and ideas related to the Wellness Program.
 - Information related to the programs offered by Anthem® EAP, bewell®, alyfe and other outside organizations.
 - Links, news feeds, and other messages which promote a culture of positive mental and physical health.

Also, as part of the Wellness Program, focus could possibly be placed on reducing the public stigma related to both mental and physical health by:

- Talking openly about mental (and physical) health .⁴
- Educating yourself and others.⁴
- Being conscious of language⁴– reminding people that words matter.
 - E + R = O
- Encouraging equality between physical and mental illness.⁴
- Showing compassion (and support) for those with mental illness.⁴
- Being honest about treatment⁴– normalize mental health treatment, just like other health care treatment.
- Tailoring programs/approaches to your company (schools) culture and existing strengths.⁵
- Training leaders to identify emotional distress and make referrals and to responding promptly and constructively to behavioral performance issues.⁵
- Sharing positive messages about mental health.⁶
- Being a mental (and physical) health advocate.⁶

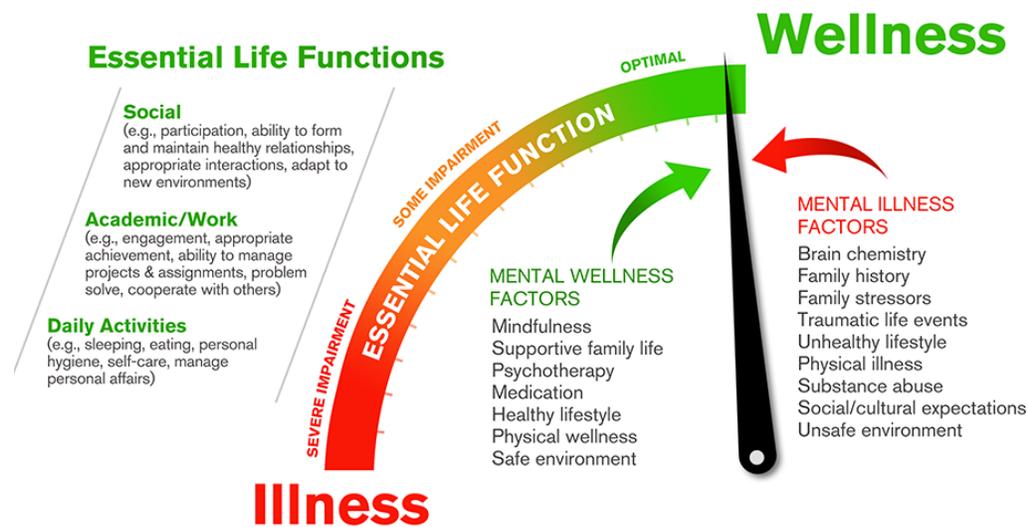
--Activities, Regular Program & Opportunities Available to Maintain and Promote Positive Mental Health

In this section we refer to mental health and figured it would be important to define what it is. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services describes mental health as:

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the dimensions of mental health exist on a continuum including both mental wellness factors as well as mental illness factors. There exists an interplay between these two factors (see Figure 2) that ultimately creates varying degrees of impact in our lives. The scope of this section focuses on the mental wellness factors. That being said, it is important that we cultivate good mental wellness because “1 in 5 Americans will suffer from a diagnosable mental illness in any given year.” (National Institute of Mental Health and Gordon, MD, PhD). Good mental wellness and help to offset varying degrees of impact from mental illness.

Figure 2 (The Youth Mental Health Project)



It is common that we neglect our mental and emotional health but we often do not have the basic skills and tools to manage these parts of our lives. In order to promote positive mental health it is important that the staff develop a framework, skills, and common language for being able to discuss mental health. This can be achieved through staff training and informal approaches built into everyday communications. That being said - there is a lot that can be accomplished with practical steps that can be taken to Identify, Address, and Maintain/Promote positive mental health. The sections below will outline recommended topics for each of these steps.



Identify

The first step to creating good mental health is developing an awareness of your feelings, emotions, behaviors, and patterns of thinking. This is an important first step even if it's not clear what the next steps are or how to deal with what you become aware of. The author Alex Korb provides an example of this with the phrase - "notice what you notice: You can't control the random bits of information that pop into your head. But you can start to notice your biases....try practicing non judgemental awareness...noticing without reacting emotionally." (Korb, PhD 55)

Stress - Identifying behaviors (conscience or unconscious) and emotions can help us to connect the dots. In addition to noticing what you notice, providing teachers specific examples of a mental state like stress. Developing an awareness could happen in a staff training, monthly communications or passive communication tools on an intranet, e-mail or common area. Example (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 21):

1. I feel tense and nervous
2. I have physical aches and pain
3. I am always tired, physically and mentally
4. I cannot tolerate noises
5. My work no longer interests me
6. I act impulsively
7. I can't get distressing events out of my mind
8. I am sad and feel like crying
9. I am less efficient than I used to be
10. I have trouble planning and thinking clearly
11. I have difficulty sleeping
12. Doing even routine things is an effort
13. I am cynical or very critical
14. I have bad dreams or nightmares
15. I am irritable, minor inconveniences or demands annoy me a lot
16. I am spending more time at work than initially

Other examples, that may take more focused training and skills, is to taking time to check-in and assess your current state but paying attention to other indicators like hunger, loneliness, anger, tiredness. Developing an awareness can help to identify when you may be experiencing a downward spiral.

Address

After the Identify phase there are more specific staff trainings/programs that could take place once or twice per year. As previously mentioned, these serve to help develop a common knowledge and understanding of these topics. These shared experiences not only help to provide specific skills but also helps to create a community around which staff can support each other (discussed further in the last section). Examples include (Peters, LPCC):

- Stress Management
- Boundaries
 - Difficult Parents of Students
 - Personal Life
 - Work/Life Balance
- Conflict In the Workplace
- Creating Effective Teams (e.g. personality styles)
- Cultural Competencies for 21st century
- Creating Resilience
- Managing Your Emotions
- Emotional intelligence

Maintain / Promote

The last step allows school leaders to maintain positive mental health by building upon and reinforcing the tools gained in the first two steps. This step also provides the opportunity to promote and advocate for awareness, reduce stigma, pursue additional resources, etc.

A common barrier to addressing/promoting positive mental health is overcoming the stigma associated with the topic. Research indicates that education and contact can have “positive effects on reducing stigma.” (Patrick 963) Therefore, an important part of making positive mental health part of the culture involves openly supporting and advocating for mental health topics. This could come in the form of tips/reminders in newsletters, sharing stories, or more involved trainings, as previously mentioned.

Peer Support - To reinforce the training but also a practical step for developing positive mental health is peer support systems. Ideas include:

- Encourage others
- Monthly tips/reminders
- Peer Stories - for those willing, share stories of how someone dealt with a difficult situation.
- Support System / Point-of-Contact - develop a support system by creating opportunities for listening. Could also be a couple key points of contact to be a safe person to help facilitate connection to resources.
- 1st year teachers - create Madeira best-practice for supporting first year teachers (or teachers new to the district); via peer support, connection to resources, networking, adjusting to cultures, dealing with high-stress parents.
- Saying goodbye -

Related, there are ways to de-stress using the following (Hough):

- Identify mental health / recognize the struggle
- Different situation in classroom stories
- Recognize others at breaking point
- Find community / self / others / family

- Reconnect intention
- Time for yourself

--Madeira Overcoming/Preventing

In this section, we want to discuss the victories that this school has made while also evaluating how to develop and strengthen some of these steps to supporting mental health. Let's face it, schools across the state have struggled to support the mental health needs of the students, staff and parents over this past year. In the midst of the pandemic, mental health concerns have been on high alert. We have needed a staff to be transparent along with a community that is unselfish in its support during this time. And of course, Madeira City schools have done this. These words from Brian Kight remind us how we need to take the choices we have to move forward with decisions:

“Whether to embrace it and act on it.
Whether to adjust it and observe more.
Whether to quiet it and kill it.
Or some other combination.”

While this past year has been challenging, it has also strengthened this school and community for the future around health and wellness. We could spend hours celebrating the actions that this staff has taken in order to press on and support each other but, we need to also take what they have learned and evaluate how to move forward with these opportunities. How can the staff and community take that step forward to make this school district more supportive around mental health?

While Anthem offers staff support from many avenues, there is also a sense of urgency around mental health support prior to when it reaches certain levels. Are there ways to support the staff and kids around mental health that can in many ways be a sort of prevention. Awareness is key for the staff around what is available for them from a supportive standpoint. What resources are available for them to share with other staff members, students, or parents? Are these resources in a readily available location for people to share? Such videos like the 1N5 resources are very helpful, but how often is the staff reminded of the resources that are available?

When it comes to community support, Madeira is second to none of course. With each month having its own stressful points, can the community find ways to support the staff based on the needs during the time of seasonal stress. Is there a part of the community that can support the actions from a mental health standpoint better in the beginning of the year? Do they have resources that time that can support them better than later on in the year?

Having Wellness check-ins for staff certainly is a necessity. Having a staff that feels comfortable to be transparent can be difficult. While the principals at Madeira have an unmatched relationship with their staff, we wanted to propose that the board look into having an outside source supply the survey. Some staff actually may feel more encouraged to be transparent because they know who is asking. Is there, however, an opportunity for different responses?

The area that has seemed to have the most impact for the staff has been around the changing of the in-service day change. Changing this day around an already 3 day weekend adds such a

sense of “inner service!” Many teachers have shared how nice it has been to use this time to reenergize. This is certainly an area to look into with a deeper lens around keeping this action in the future.

1. Looking at what Anthem offers staff, do you feel that staff uses these and if so which one the most? Have they mentioned ones that are helpful?

The Anthem programs are helpful for Counseling, Legal consultation, financial consultation, ID recovery, Dependent Care, and Crisis Consultation. We wanted to look at prevention ideas that we can learn from this past year. What are the preventative measures that Madeira as well as other schools have done in the past along with this past year to help support our staff and help prevent and/or overcome many aspects such as stress/burnout, grief/loss, and secondary trauma.

2. Having a community to support and encourage them in creative ways has been tremendous, but can always change from year to year based on different opportunities through the seasons. Mental health needs can be supported by more proactive support and encouragement from the community. Can there be more awareness around what can be done for support? Community board for support sign up on the school website?

3. While there are videos such as the 1N5 resources that can be helpful for teachers to give to parents or kids, they also can play a role in supporting the staff. It is helpful for the staff to have had the 1N5 and Mindpeace resources for parents. Principals send out videos or links on weekly email to staff. Adding Emily Nutley for the 1st and 2nd grade – Having her to be able to monitor wellness for the kids and to be able to give the kids the tools to cope with areas like anxiety. This ultimately helps the staff as well. Having that support is amazing.

<https://1n5.org/resources-for-students-high-school/>

4. Rearranging the schedule – Looking at the schedule at the beginning of the year and making the decision to have Teacher inservice days on a weekend that is a long weekend has been great! Giving the teachers the ability to be virtual as well and to have a wellness afternoon on that inservice day has been outstanding.

5. Wellness check ins – Having the principals check in with the staff through a survey is a tremendous idea. Our questions are:

a. Is this helpful coming from the principal or should it be done from a more outside source?

b. Can there be different questions based on time of year and work load.

c. Should there be a level of transparency around how the staff is doing? Possibly a meter of an average of where the staff is. Staff may want to know the reasoning around the questions. Staff may want to help those around them.

6. When you look at all the items for mental wellness for the staff, was there something that you thought “wow, that is going to be very helpful?” The certain Anthem apps seem to be very helpful if you want to work on goals around physical health.

7. Is what you are doing based on what is given vs what you think they need especially during this crisis?

It is good to know that there is mental health support from Anthem, but much of what the staff needs in order to help is to have the community support and encourage the staff.

8. Is this based on research or are they based on what people are asking for or both? Both. Chris and Niki have done expensive research for supporting the staff from a mental health basis.

9. How to make staff more aware? We will get into this more with Amanda by looking into ways to make staff more aware of opportunities for support along with making the school know of needs from the staff. Can there be a better two-way street of communication?

10. How can we make the community more aware of opportunities?

Actions taken for supporting the staff:

- Wellness Wednesdays
- Wellness Calendar or Bingo
- Yoga sessions
- Drawing for Door Dash or Starbucks
- Happy Hour
- Happiness Carts
- Relaxed clothing
- PTO Lunches

11. Look and listen for signs of distress. Make sure all staff members are prepared to look for and recognize indicators of underlying mental health problems. Schools will need help from states and districts to identify and adopt curricula, protocols and tools for supporting and assessing the mental health and social-emotional needs of students and staff. Adopt protocols or tools that include physical and mental health screening information or simple questioning strategies that can be used in any classroom. National organizations offer tools that help teachers and leaders identify grief, trauma and turmoil. School re-entry guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics, for example, includes recommendations for addressing students’ behavioral health and providing emotional support. Schools and districts can also provide ongoing professional learning opportunities that help staff recognize and react to these issues in students and adults.

Currently what is being done to help with promoting mental and physical health at the middle school:

-All schools collaborate and work together when looking at the overall mental health of teachers. Goals are the same.

- Fall (2020) the Middle School created a survey for the staff. Another one will be sent out January (2021). Julia Cabral, partnered with Nicki in creating this survey. The survey assessed emotions that the teachers were experiencing and any challenges regarding the students and new COVID protocols. Open ended questions allowed the teachers to communicate any additional support they needed. Overall great informational feedback was given.
- The middle school holds weekly team meetings for the teachers with the principal and school counselor. This allows for open communication and overall gauging where the teachers are experiencing the greatest challenges.
- Tyler Erwin, from the Forward Edge was/is available for tech support with the new zoom learning. Fellow teacher, Brandon Opichka was also available to help teachers with digital concerns.
- In September the Middle School was able to hold a teacher-in-service outdoors. Gretchen Bloomstrum, the assistant principal, taught mindfulness practice and other team building activities took place. During this time accountability partners were created and other wellness games/competitions took place during that month.
- Relaxed work attire on Friday was implemented.
- On Wellness Wednesday healthy treats were provided for staff.
- Niki mentioned she tries to model proper work life balance by turning her computer off on the weekends.
- Positive community feedback and encouragement from students/parents helps the overall mentality of the staff. Parents bringing in snacks to the teachers and emails being sent thanking the staff for their hard work makes a difference.

Thoughts for future programs/services:

- Offering yoga class during break time or after school.
- Making the staff lounge more relaxing and pleasant by painting, adding plants or bringing in more comfortable seating.
- Transforming an unused room into an exercise area for the teachers.

--Best Practices for Maintaining a Healthy Work/Life Balance

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is key to the mental, emotional and physical well-being of teachers. While a lot of the responsibility of this relies on the teachers themselves, there are ways that administrators and school board members can help them foster healthy boundaries. We will discuss both in this section.

Let's first look at what teachers can do to prioritize a healthy work-life balance. It's assumed that teachers take work home. They should begin by establishing both a morning and evening routine that is school-free. The research says to take work home, but set boundaries to protect time at home. They should designate a space and time to check emails. In addition, they can consider not installing (or uninstalling) work email from a phone or other home devices and turn off notifications. It's recommended that, if it would help mentally and emotionally, designate one

day or evening when they work late. Conversely, at least one day should be designated where no work is done at home. Another suggestion is to schedule tasks instead of just making lists.

One of the most difficult things for teachers to do is to know when to say no, even when the administration asks. Keeping tab of your capacity is vitally important to maintaining a work-life balance. That leads to another suggestion - it's ok for teachers to ask for help.

It's also advisable to take a break during the school day. Professionals encourage teachers to use break/prep time to take care of personal business, if necessary. They should try to get outside for 10-15 minutes. This is important not only for mental health, but physical as well. Professionals encourage scheduling time hobbies and spending time with friends outside of the education system.

Similar to the findings on wellness, teachers are encouraged to incorporate mindfulness activities, such as meditation, reflective writing, getting proper sleep, and scheduling time to do nothing at all. Self-care results in healthy teachers, which often leads to overall student achievement.

So, how can school administrators and school board members help teachers to foster a work-life balance? One way is to give teachers "permission" to take care of themselves. Give permission to use plan time to take care of personal business. Encourage teachers to leave school at reasonable times and allow for casual dress, if it does not affect student performance. Some schools have set up help lines for staff for wellness and counseling services. There is also evidence that scheduled wellness sessions help teachers improve emotional, mental and physical health. Scheduled social times when work talk is "prohibited" also assists in teachers' feeling of belonging to the greater school community.

--Promoting Positive Physical Health

As part of the goal to promote staff wellness and positive mental health among educators we believe physical activity is important. Physical activity is a natural mood elevator-studies show it relieves mild anxiety and depression, improves energy, and increases a general sense of well-being (1). This section will outline activities, regular programs and opportunities to maintain and promote physical health. While educators typically seem to have minimal free time we felt it was important to look at ways physical activity can be brought into the workplace culture along with holding presentations or group challenges during the work day which provide opportunities for more self-care and peer support.

Within the school setting

Workplace Culture

Physical activity plays an important role in employees' health, well-being, and quality of life.

Employees who are healthier are more productive, require less sick leave, and have lower healthcare costs. Specifically, research has shown that employees who get at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week miss an average of 4.1 fewer days of work per year (2).

“When leaders regularly communicate the importance of employee health and well-being — and walk the talk — it becomes part of the corporate identity. Implementing a workplace physical activity policy drives home the value of this lifestyle behavior to the corporate mission — and outlines a framework describing how workplace physical activity will be promoted” (1).

These are ideas to start integrating physical activity into the workplace culture.

- Conduct a workplace walkability assessment to ensure a safe and pleasant environment for walking. Notify the teachers of these options and encourage the use during lunch hours or breaks. Example: middle school track, high school track, elementary neighborhood, etc.
- Make stairwells more appealing with paint, artwork, and motivational signage. Example: signs to remind those to take the stairs or park further away from the building.
- Encourage workers to take brief, 2-3 minute fitness breaks throughout the day for brisk walking, stretching, or stair climbing.
- Encourage walking 1:1 meetings.
- Make standing or pacing vs. sitting at long meetings an acceptable option
- Encourage workers to be active at their workstations as much as possible — by stretching, standing while on the phone or pumping out a few desk push-ups while viewing a web conference.(1) (2)

Other Programs or Opportunities

- Strength/group fitness class in the gym/cafeteria or in the HS weight room either before or after school.
- Yoga classes-outside or in conference or break rooms. Taught either by a teacher volunteer or outside professional.
- Weekly or monthly exercise challenges with incentives-wellness ambassador or identified wellness champion would lead. The link below gives an example of what that could look like.

<https://resources.risepeople.com/hubfs/Ebook-How-to-Run-a-Workplace-Wellness-Challenge-Your-Employees-Will-Love-Rise-People.pdf?hsCtaTracking=156f95b6-dbc3-4b63-a02a-0c479e7ce748%7C2e7ecd0e-c7db-4687-8969-cc37569bedfd>

- Sponsor or promote employee participation in community events like 5k or 10k runs, basketball leagues, or charity walk-a-thons.
- Offer free or reduced cost pedometers to teachers. Have week-to week competitions to increase peer support.

Self-care and peer support

Providing teachers with information on ways to implement physical activity in their daily routine along with the benefits of enlisting peer support is beneficial as well. Holding educational

presentations and sending informational emails that explain available options or different ways of thinking about physical activity could help the teachers knowledge level and self-efficacy when it comes to their personal physical activity levels.

- Hold a presentation or group discussion with the teachers/staff about the difference between *physical activity* versus *structured exercise* and promote both. Explain how physical activity can be implemented throughout the day (3) (4)
- Letting teachers know about the available gyms and fitness centers with times that would work with their schedule. Possible classes at 6 am or 7 am allowing them to take classes before school. Encourage them to sign up with fellow teachers for accountability.
- Form running or walking groups with fellow teachers (5).
- Hold a presentation discussing the benefits and simplicity of walking. Wellness Champion to present (6).
- For those teachers with children encourage family exercise when at home (7).
- Let teachers know about the different programs that Anthem or their spouses insurance offers in regards to gym discounts and existing programs related to physical fitness, weight management, healthy eating, etc. Give them a brief overview of the Sydney Health App.
- Sydney Health App intro video

<https://clicktime.symantec.com/3QgE3JTkVMdETCJgYqKzU8b7Vc?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.brainshark.com%2Fanthem%2Fvu%3Fpi%3DzHVzLYN1TzdZaqz0>

Other Anthem fitness related links:

- FitLifePodcasts: <https://timewellspent.anthem.com/employer-planning/fitlife-podcasts>
- Health Kits: <https://timewellspent.anthem.com/employer-planning/health-kits>

---What are businesses doing to promote healthy employees?

Businesses are taking strides to raise awareness and promote mental wellbeing in the workplace. Prior to the pandemic, many employers had already increased their focus on workplace mental health and now it's even more critical. "The pandemic has cast a spotlight on the need to address mental health in the workplace," said Punit Renjen, CEO of Deloitte, and "as business leaders, we have a responsibility to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues like stress and anxiety to ensure everyone can thrive at work." (Hart, 2021)

According to the CDC, 63% of Americans are part of the US labor force and the workplace can be a key location for activities designed to improve well-being for adults. Workplace wellness programs can identify those at risk and connect them to treatment and put in place supports to help people reduce and manage stress. Research shows that many people with mental health disorders also need care for other physical health conditions. By addressing mental health issues in the workplace, employers can reduce health care costs for their businesses and employees. (CDC (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*), 2018)

What can employers do to support and promote mental wellbeing in the workplace:

1. **Be vulnerable.** Everyone has experienced some level of discomfort/struggle so lean into the power of sharing experiences to help normalize it and create more awareness.
2. **Encourage sharing amongst staff from the top down.** Research has shown that authentic leadership can cultivate trust and improve employee engagement and performance.
3. **Model healthy behaviors.** Don't just say you support it, model it so your team can feel they can prioritize self-care and set boundaries
4. **Offer flexibility and be inclusive.** Staff needs will continue to change. Be proactive about flexibility - meet people where they are
5. **Communicate more than you think you need to.** Clarify any modified work hours and norms. Remove stress where possible by setting expectations about workloads, prioritizing what must get done, and acknowledging what can slide if necessary. Also, make teams aware of available resources and encourage them to use those tools and services.
6. **Invest in Training.** Provide outside resources or low-cost mental health resource groups to continue building community and offering peer support.
7. **Modify policies and practices.** Look at your rules and norms around core hours, flexible hours, paid time off, email and other communications, and paid and unpaid leave.
8. **Measure effectiveness.** Be intentional about checking in to take the pulse of your team. (Greenwood & Krol, 2020)

As World Health Organization ambassador Liya Kebede said, "Helping others isn't a chore, it is one of the greatest gifts there is." Your willingness to open up an honest conversation about mental health with your employees is exactly the kind of gift that so many people want and need right now.

What can leaders do without pushing boundaries -

1. Talk about health holistically.
2. Don't try to fix people.
3. Really listen. (Riegel, 2020)

In addition to the research presented above, a survey was conducted amongst business leaders to gain additional insights. Sixty-one business leaders were invited to participate and twenty-three completed the survey (37.7%). The survey content was as follows:

Survey Title - Mental Health at Work

Introduction - Thank you for taking this short survey to give feedback, from a business leader perspective, about how your company is addressing mental health. This information is part of a school study for Madeira City Schools surrounding this topic. All information is confidential and anonymous. Again, thank you for your time and input.

Questions -

1. Mental health issues are a top concern at the workplace, even more so since the onset of the pandemic.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

2. Who is responsible for promoting mental health initiatives at your company? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Leadership
 - b. Human Resources
 - c. Employee led committee
 - d. Outside Resources (Contracted services through benefits and/or counseling)
 - e. We do not have a formal process in place for this.
 - f. Other

3. How do you support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Connect them to resources through a EAP (Employee Assistance Program)
 - b. Work one-on-one with employee to find the right resources/solutions as much as possible
 - c. Include mental health as part of your health care plan
 - d. Use communication to reduce stigma and increase access to mental health resources
 - e. We do not have a formal process in place for this.
 - f. Other

4. How do you promote well-being in your workplace? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Build as much flexibility as possible into all employees' schedules.
 - b. Offer access to apps that can help with sleep and stress reduction.
 - c. Offer things like a meditation room, mindfulness training, and/or yoga classes at work
 - d. Encourage employees to use their paid time off.
 - e. Provide accommodations and develop a return-to-work process so that employees who take a leave of absence because of a mental health issue feel supported when they come back.

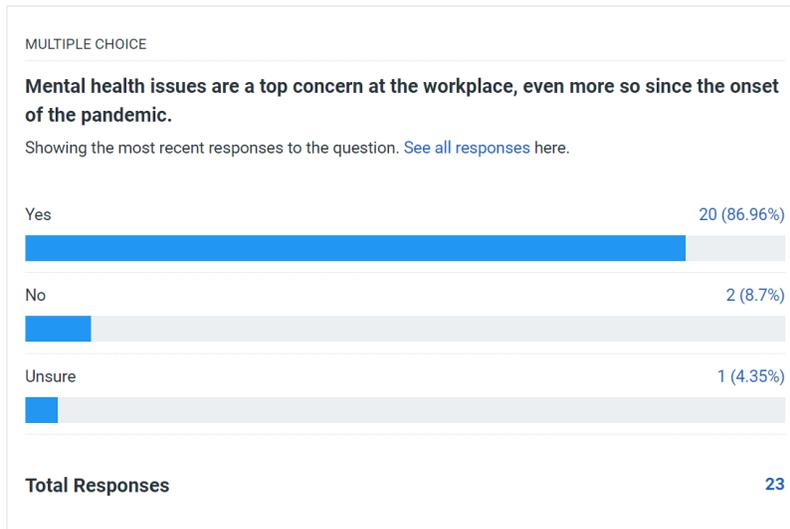
f. Other

5. As a leader, how do you model healthy behaviors to your team?

6. Are there other initiatives your company has implemented to promote positive mental well being (that were not mentioned above)?

7. How would you like to see improvements to the existing plan/process?

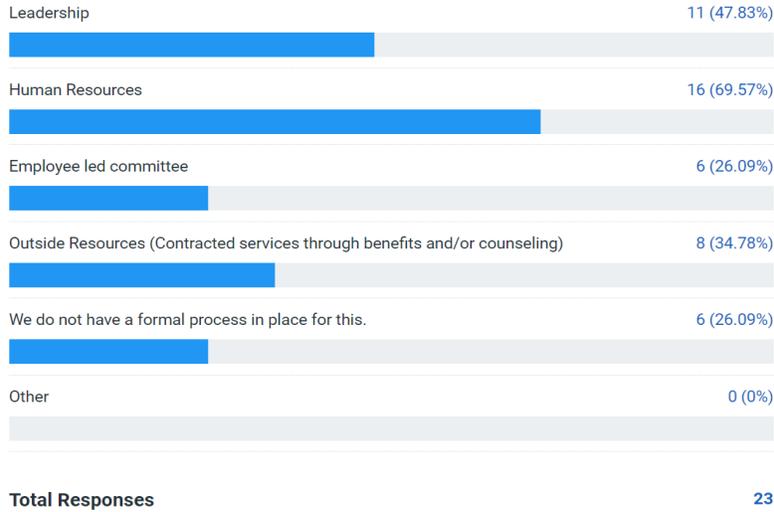
Findings were as follows:



CHECKBOXES

Who is responsible for promoting mental health initiatives at your company? (Check all that apply)

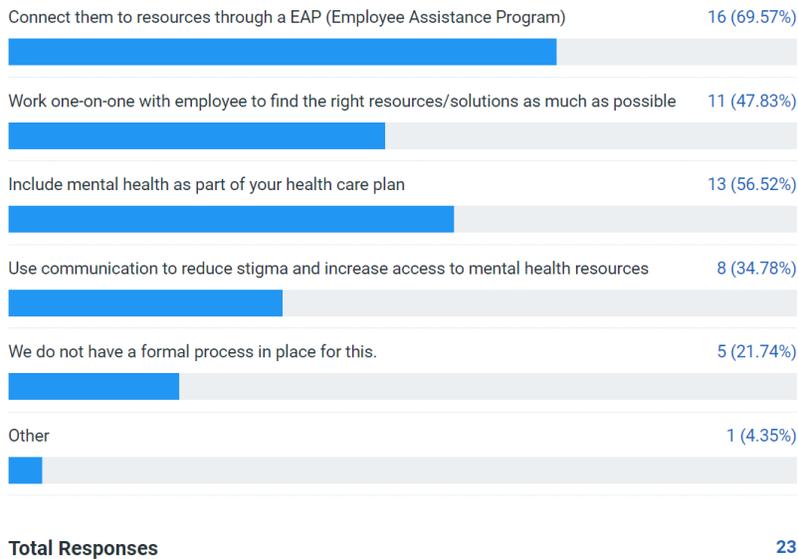
Showing the most recent responses to the question. [See all responses here.](#)

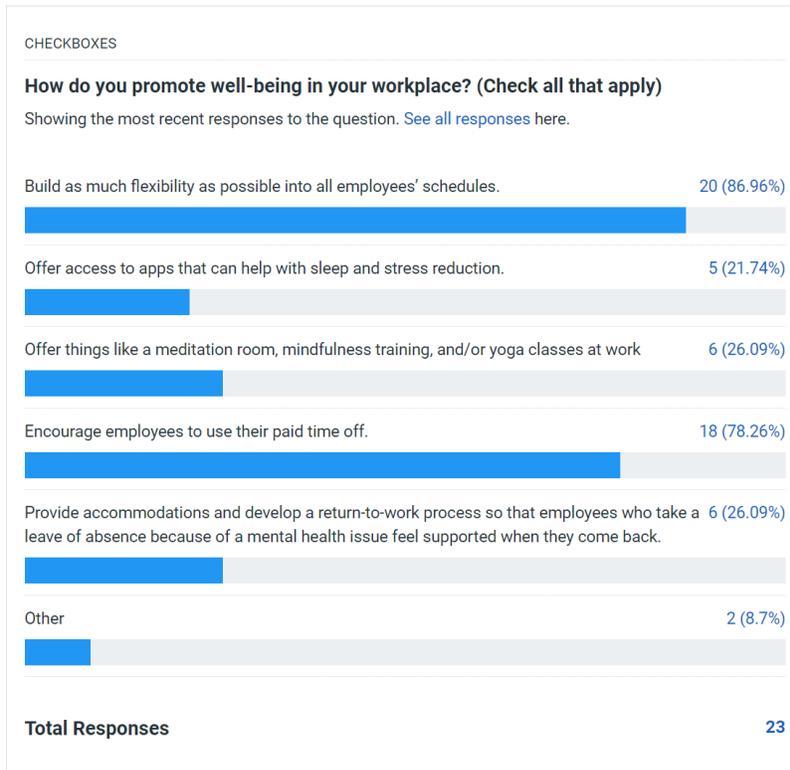


CHECKBOXES

How do you support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem? (Check all that apply)

Showing the most recent responses to the question. [See all responses here.](#)





5. As a leader, how do you model healthy behaviors to your team? (19 responses)

- Lead by example, healthy lifestyle by eating habits, exercise and work/life balance.
- I talk openly about self-care, the power of daily practices like meditation and journaling. I encourage my teams, mentees and direct reports to take down time and to focus on themselves first.
- Talk openly about your own challenges to breakdown taboos of mental health.
- I have the right support systems to navigate the above.
- As we all know the culture of a business and within it's offices is extremely important. Thank goodness we have not had to lay anyone off or reduce payroll during the pandemic. However, many of our employee's spouses or relatives have experienced the financial impact of the virus. As noted, we offer a great deal of flexibility in schedules and that has certainly been a positive impact
- We pay for an outsourced corporate chaplain, wellness coach and EAP. Increased communication during COVID includes daily huddles, weekly department meetings, monthly one one one meetings and a biweekly President update meeting with the entire staff.
- Bring levity and team building activities to the workplace but also encourage them to step away and do something just for them.
- This short survey has made me make this a new priority for our people.
- Daily positive messages from our CEO that focus on thankfulness and encouraging a team environment, even while remote. Leadership team shares

podcasts, books and emails with the team, to build hope and promote awareness around behaviors to create strong mental health in the midst of chaos and uncertainty.

- Only sending out emails during the traditional work day and times. When I work outside those hours, I leave any emails as a draft and send them the next business day.
- I encourage my team to maintain a good work/life balance. With that I utilize my PTO throughout the year and also take time away from work to attend doctors appointments etc. I encourage my team to do the same.
- I find it important to make sure I'm following my own advice. If I don't take my PTO, my team will feel that they shouldn't either. I have very open dialogues about stress especially since the pandemic. So much so, that when I appeared to the team to be struggling myself, they were comfortable enough to come to me and say so. I also encourage the leaders under me to make sure they're putting eyeballs on people, even if it's over Teams, to keep connected as much as possible.
- Through our core values
- Take vacation and encourage them to, flexible with employees with families, weekly huddles to gauge stress levels of the team
- By example. Openly talking about personal and/or family struggles
- We have come from a model of working long hours and even Saturdays so I try and limit excessive time in the office. Often speak of exercise and promote outdoor activities sponsored by the company during spring and summer months.
- When appropriate, share my own life and experiences to model the need for balance and how that can be difficult at times. Take my personal time away from the office and share my personal life experiences.
- I haven't been a very good model myself during the pandemic in terms of work/life balance. I do communicate the mental health initiatives the company provides to the leadership team and employee population. Prior to the pandemic, I was usually open about my time off and time I committed to personal events. In the past, I've provided "summer Friday free 1/2 days" to my employee population. Have encouraged time off as well as employee socials that I've hosted at different times of the day.
- Take time off to enjoy family and friends, set boundaries with email (when necessary), talk openly about times when I struggle with stress and other mental health concerns

6. Are there other initiatives your company has implemented to promote positive mental well being (that were not mentioned above)? (15 responses)

- The company has a health club membership that all employees are encouraged to use.

- We have had extensive Enneagram training to help employees heighten their self awareness and improve their relationships at work and at home. This helps create healthier boundaries and lowers conflict that seems personal.
- We planned on bringing specific programming when in person but had to cancel during COVID. We need to bring back virtually with the same intent or in person.
- We are navigating a lot of resources and providing to our team and our clients. Also, includes www.talentmagnet.com/quiz - with action plans, exercises and next steps based on how someone self-rates.
- We have attempted to communicate on a regular basis. Zoom is not the best but at least it does allow us to see each other. In our state things have opened up and more employees are coming back to work.
- We do have “mental health” time off for our employees.
- We offer an EAP through our benefits. Although the information is posted, we have pamphlets that we can hand out to employees as we become aware they are having personal/mental issues.
- We have a CoVid blog that provides weekly updates and gives tips for handling the emotional battle as well as providing updates on the company's planned actions.
- Not sure
- Group wellness initiatives, corporate fun days
- Flexible work schedules which allow for employees to take care of themselves and family whenever needed
- Company pays for a monthly gym membership and holds step challenges for all employees.
- Create a culture of support and kindness in our workplace. Have meetings where we hear from everyone, not just leadership and try to connect how what we do supports who we are and the other way around. We don't chase happiness, we strive for well being and success which includes challenges and times of stress in each life. But never alone and part of a team.
- During the pandemic, HR led a couple of different health series: Taking Care Series; Reset, Recharge and Renew Series; Wellness Series (6 week program featuring a weekly topic-ie. anger, anxiety/stress, caring for the caregiver, resilience, grief and loss, emotional eating. All sessions were recorded along with additional resource information.
- Survey team to learn how they are feeling and how our company could be more supportive

7. How would you like to see improvements to the existing plan/process? (10 responses)

- Continue to break down barriers to start the conversation.
- I would like to and will have our health care provider come in and remind them of the resources available as well as share apps and resources they may not be aware of. I think rotating and supporting "mental health moments" If they are having a bad day and just need to step away... we encourage them to do so.

- I would like to know how other small businesses deal with this as well. I look forward to hopefully hearing more from you Amanda. Thank you so much for raising awareness to this important issue.
- Provide resources outside of our company that can be accessed privately by our employees or bring in speakers for a lunch and learn for our own staff around mental health
- I think there's still a stigma of using the EAP for fear of the company finding out. Even though we tell people it's confidential, we need to find a way to make the teams more comfortable using these services.
- Not sure
- Continue the open conversation in media and within companies to destigmatize these issues
- Nothing to add here
- Require employees to take at least 1 PTO every quarter. Change PTO 12 month allotment to begin and end in March. Our fiscal year is 1/1-12/31. Close of the business year is hectic so employees lose PTO days.
- Continued conversation and education on the topic - normalize mental health like we have physical health

Creating opportunities for connection is important. “Employees are more vulnerable to the negative impact of stress inside and outside of the workplace if they have not built strong positive relationships at work,” says Schultz. “Help make work interesting, social, and fun, so stressed-out employees aren’t working in isolation. Workplace relationships that are positive provide a source of support — that’s hard for anything else to replace.” (Rawe, Unknown)

Intranet/Distribution - make is easy and accessible

Launching and leveraging a school intranet could be beneficial to make resources easily accessible for staff and keep them engaged and collaborating. Easing communication and creating clarity could mitigate stress for the staff. School Pointe, Madeira’s website platform, offers an intranet solution that is secure for district employees. This module has the ability to post internal news, documents, forms and events. (See [Features](#)). This site could also be used to boost recognition and reward, simplify team onboarding, provide organizational clarity, encourage knowledge sharing, and will reinforce Madeira’s brand and values.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, given the broad amount of research conducted, ideas generated and feedback from the business industry, below are a list of recommendations this group wishes to present to both the Madeira school board and administration with the goal of establishing a set of best practices to promote staff wellness and positive mental health among educators.

- Develop and promote a Wellness Program for the staff which aligns with Madeira’s culture and values.
- Create a Madeira staff wellness and resource web page.

- As part of the Wellness Program include: teacher training, open, authentic and constant communication, transparency through surveys, flexibility with policy and procedures, the promotion of positive physical habits and a healthy work/life balance.
- Reduce the stigma related to both mental and physical health.

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