

# Your Employees Are Not Okay: The Current Impact of Poor Mental Health in the Workplace

Combat the mental health crisis and champion employee happiness and productivity in your workplace.



“If you’re not thinking about the mental fitness of your colleagues and teams, you need to be. We’re in the midst of a mental health crisis that’s taking a direct toll on our collective productivity and performance — but with the right approach, you can ignite positive change.”

—Shirzad Chamine



*An estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year globally to depression and anxiety — at a cost of \$1 trillion per year in lost productivity.*

—The World Health Organization

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**Organizations need new solutions to thwart common mental health issues. Learn what's behind the current crisis — and what your team can do to improve mental fitness across a diverse workforce.**



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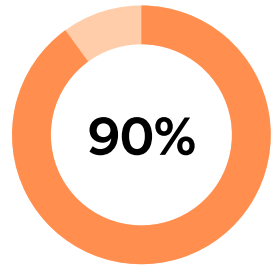


# Chapter 1:

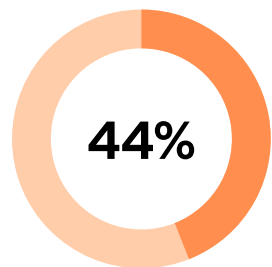
There's a mental health crisis in the world  
— and it's becoming a workplace  
predicament, too



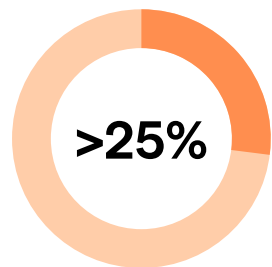
Every day, everywhere, people from all walks of life are suffering from an invisible plague: poor emotional health. Nearly 300 million people in the world today suffer from depression, according to World Health Organization data. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for 15–29-year-olds. Those with mental health conditions can face challenges from the effects of stigma, access to treatment, and related physical illnesses.



**A resounding 90% of U.S. adults**  
agree that the country is experiencing a mental health crisis  
according to a [CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation poll](#)



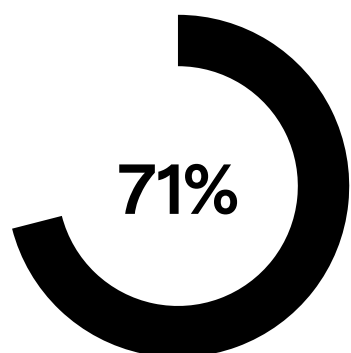
**Across Europe**  
nearly half of surveyed workers say their work stress has increased as a result of the pandemic  
according to an [EU-OSHA's workers' survey](#)



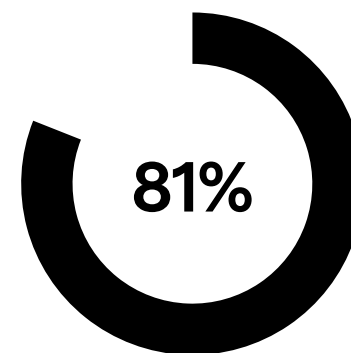
**In Asia**  
more than a quarter of employees have reported symptoms of depression and anxiety, which, among other implications, can help set the stage for burnout. Worldwide, one in four employees say they're experiencing symptoms of burnout — but in Asia, the figure is even higher — nearing one in three  
according to [McKinsey data](#)

More and more, workers are turning to their employers to help them address their mental health concerns, according to the American Psychological Association's 2022 Work and Wellbeing Survey. Seven in ten (71%) workers believe their employer is more concerned about their mental health than in the past.

The survey also found that 81% of its respondents plan to look for workplaces that support mental health in the future.



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## The human face of mental health at work

This story is about more than just numbers, though. Real people you know and work with — perhaps your friends, family members, or even you — are suffering from stress, anxiety, depression, or other difficulties at work.

And the science says it's high time we collectively listen and act. Failure to act limits us not only as humans but as business leaders, too.



### What's the difference between mental health and mental fitness?

Mental health and mental fitness are related but distinct concepts. Mental health refers to a person's overall psychological and emotional wellbeing. It includes their ability to cope with stress, manage their emotions, and maintain healthy relationships. In the mental health field, qualified healthcare professionals focus on diagnosing and treating mental health conditions.

On the other hand, mental fitness refers to a person's ability to use their cognitive and emotional resources to handle the challenges of daily life. It is similar to physical fitness, which is the ability to use one's physical resources to perform physical tasks. Mental fitness describes the ability to thrive and be resilient in the face of adversity.

Mental fitness coaches may help individuals or groups to build and maintain mental strength and resilience, but they do not provide medical advice or services. Instead, mental fitness involves practices such as mindfulness, meditation, positive thinking, and self-reflection to help people improve their mental wellbeing.



*“Putting mental health at the center of workplace policies is more important than ever.”*

according to the American Psychological Association.

A vast body of psychological research bears out the importance of supporting mental health in the workplace. Organizations can build stronger foundations with practical resources — from mental health coverage and flexible work policies to appropriate employee training.

Purposeful mental health support can spark profound value across your workforce, enabling employees to unlock their own potential both as individuals and as part of more dynamic, engaged, and productive teams.

But to improve mental fitness in the workplace, we need to better understand how we got here in the first place.

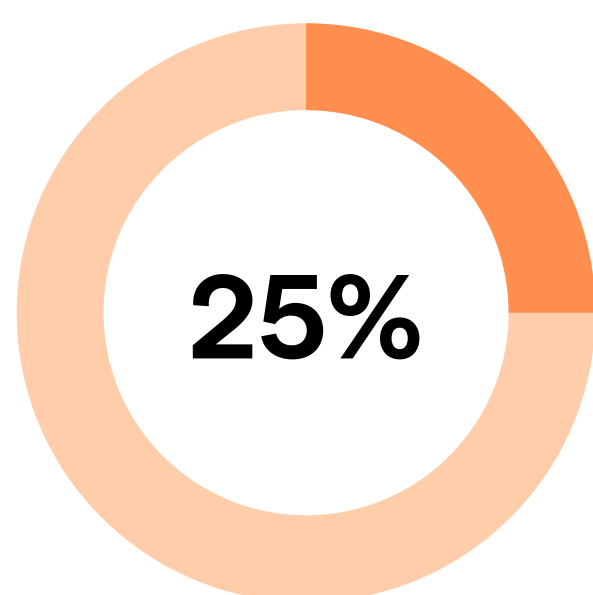
## What's behind today's diminished mental health?

A global pandemic. Social unrest. Economic uncertainty. Climate crisis. The realities are overwhelming and seem to come from all directions these days. Volumes could be written about how each of these larger societal forces shapes our mental health at home and at work.

Let's zoom in on the COVID-19 pandemic, for one. During the early days of the shutdown, people everywhere, across all walks of life, felt a deep and prolonged isolation that was unlike any other time in modern history. Since then, the loneliness epidemic has only continued.

A global survey of 20,398 people across 101 countries, as published in the Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, found that 21% of respondents reported feeling severe loneliness during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparison, a mere 6% said they'd felt that way before the pandemic struck.

Lifestyle and mental health disruptions through the pandemic also caused a spike in risk for depression, with many people experiencing irregular physical activity, sleep, and scheduling.



### Worldwide, the WHO tracked

a 25% increase in anxiety and depression rates during the first year of the pandemic

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Some segments of the population were harder hit than others. For example, a survey of college students in the U.S. found a 90% spike in depression risk rates, according to peer-reviewed research in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Since then, many of those respondents have entered the workforce, too.

Meanwhile, mass uncertainty over how long the pandemic would last, or what to expect with vaccine development, kept communal anxiety high.

Beneath this anxiety lay the existential fear many people felt throughout the early days of the pandemic, as too many of us lost loved ones and the danger of virus transmission seemed to lurk around every corner.

All told, is it any wonder that the extreme anxiety, stress, and yes, grief humanity shared as we worked to flatten the curve has taken a long-term toll on our mental health?



One silver lining of the pandemic has emerged, however. For the first time, colleagues saw into each other's homes and into their daily lives. Situations that were previously unimaginable in corporate settings happened every day — gaffes like a child bursting into song in the background or your colleague's cat sauntering across their desk mid-meeting — helped us to see another side of the people we work with daily.

The virus threatened us all, whatever level of management or privilege we held. This kind of collective vulnerability helped level the field, sparking new compassion, breaking down barriers, and ultimately, advancing discussion about mental health in general — and what to do about it.



## Changing work models, changing stressors

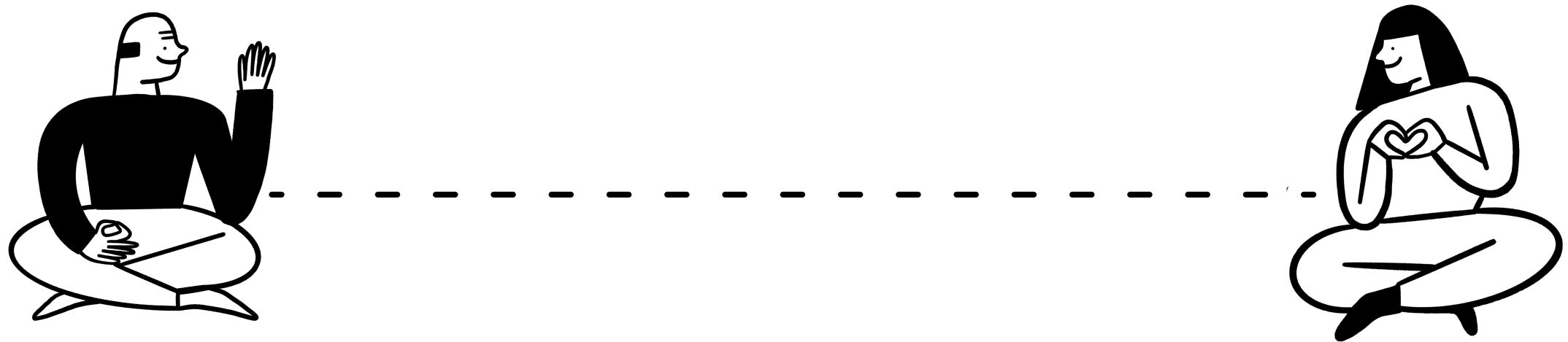
The connection between mental wellbeing and work also came zooming into sharper focus through the course of the pandemic.

Our work lives were upended by COVID-19 — as each of us experienced in our own way. Working parents had to share their workspaces (not to mention their time) with children doing virtual learning. Social personalities who lived and worked alone had to adapt to having more solitary time than they wished.

As remote and hybrid work shifted from the greatest unplanned workplace experiment in history, to the prevailing trend in many sectors, the ongoing return to work has exacerbated mental duress. In fits and starts, many of those who went back earlier than others felt anxious about virus transmission. Many whose offices stayed shuttered longer, missed the community of in-person work even more as they watched family members and neighbors head off to work in the mornings.

And in the hybrid settings employees increasingly want, navigating changing workplace culture and dynamics isn't a cakewalk, either. Business leaders may question their initial decisions. Did we choose the right collaboration technology? Do people know how to make the most of it? Is it necessary for employees to go into the office on a day when no one else on their team is there?

Add to all of that the economic uncertainty, social unrest, political disagreement, and environmental concerns pervading the world, and it gets easier to understand the global forces contributing to the mental health crisis at home and at work.



## Close-up: Today's most vulnerable sectors

While every company has been dramatically affected by the pandemic and subsequent effects, certain industries have been harder hit than others.

Professionals across the following sectors have exhibited a distinct rise in stress, anxiety, and depression over the last three years:



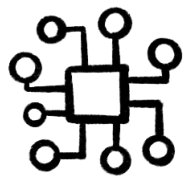
### Healthcare

Burnout among healthcare employees was at an all-time high even before COVID-19 took an insurmountable toll on many clinical care providers. The wave of related resignations has prompted the [U.S. Surgeon General](#) to sound the alarm, projecting a nationwide shortage of 3 million low-wage health workers in the next five years and nearly 140,000 physicians by 2033. Today, the cost of physician turnover in the U.S. has surpassed [\\$5 billion per year](#). “The nation’s health depends on the well-being of our health workforce,” [Surgeon General Vivek Murthy](#) said in a statement addressing healthcare worker burnout. “Confronting the long-standing drivers of burnout among our health workers must be a top national priority.”



### Finance

Pressure may be part of the job description in finance, but talk of a looming recession and tensions around return to office expectations have only tightened the lid on the pressure cooker for people in this line of work. A [university-backed survey](#) of financial advisors in Australia offers a stark case in point: Roughly three-quarters (73%) of respondents report high levels of burnout at work, with 67% reporting some level of depression, 33% seeking medical treatment related to job stress, and 42% considering leaving the field altogether.



## Technology

While other sectors struggled through the pandemic and are now emerging stronger for it, Big Tech was booming — doubling down on staffing and fast-tracking innovation to satisfy unprecedented market demand. Now, however, the expansionist era is drawing to a close. Amid the shadow of economic uncertainty, Wall Street and private equity investors have demanded tech firms course correct, and more than 100,000 skilled workers globally had been laid off in the past year alone. Even those whose jobs remain safe, however, can experience layoff anxiety, from the social and productivity implications of losing their colleagues, to an underlying dread that their position will be next on the chopping block.



## Government

While healthcare may have been more visibly affected by the pandemic, government employees have been reporting “alarming rates of psychological distress,” too.

According to a recent study of state and local public servants in the U.S., one in three employees say they're burnt out, and one in five report compassion fatigue, which is associated with poor sleep, strained relationships, and depression.

Especially vulnerable are frontline workers, such as those working in unemployment offices or public health.

Across the board, government job workloads are ballooning due to months-long vacancies and widespread under staffing, with 43% of government employees stating that workload is the leading cause of burnout. Financial insecurity and financial stress have also increased unexpectedly as the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated many municipal workers' money concerns.

# Chapter 2:

Who's on point?  
Workplace leaders are feeling  
the brunt



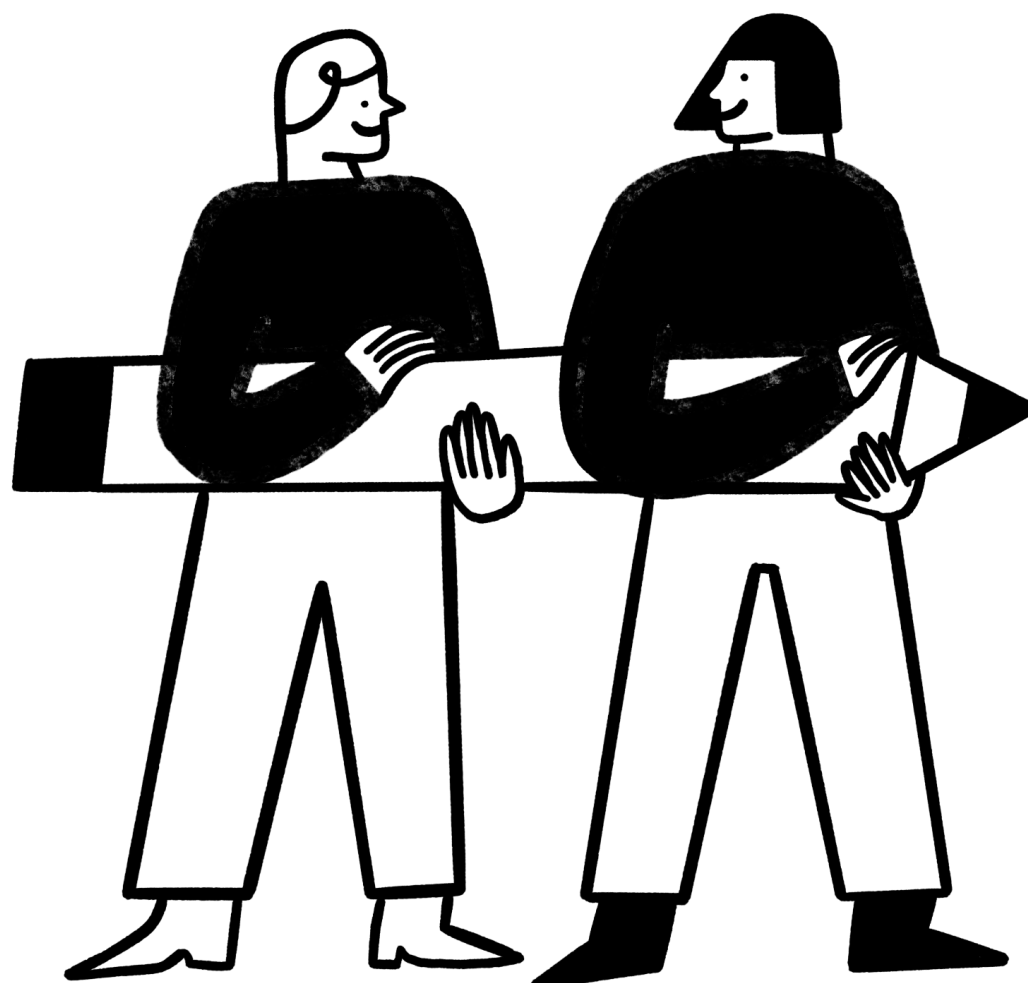


From the C-suite to the HR team to department leads, decision-makers across the organization are recognizing the need to prioritize employee mental health.

It's a knotty problem. It's tough to identify people who are struggling because they often don't want to call attention to how they are feeling. Humanity has a way to go to destigmatize mental health challenges, and people want to maintain their privacy. Front-line managers are rarely trained on how to address mental wellbeing in the real world. They may know someone is experiencing challenges, but they do not know what to say.

Yet today, in almost every organization, leaders can see the importance of making positive changes now, not down the road.

What's been getting their attention? Plenty, these days, from rampant resignation to quiet quitting to lackluster performance — all direct manifestations of the mental health crisis as it plays out at work.



## Understanding disengagement, performance and productivity

For starters, the Great Resignation may have reached a head in 2021, but the work engagement slump is only worsening, according to an August 2022 [Gallup poll](#). A mere one-third (32%) of U.S. employees report feeling engaged with their work — the first decline in a decade.

### What's more?

17% of responding employees say they are actively disengaged.

There's no single reason for the disengagement dilemma, but it doesn't help matters that people are also often being asked to do more — to expand the scope of their responsibilities — without a promotion or raise. Some are calling this trend [quiet hiring](#), and it's taking its own toll on the employee experience.

According to a Monster poll, half of workers who were quiet hired say their role is not aligned with their skill set. When asked what they would think of their company if they were quiet hired, 41% of respondents said they'd view it as disorganized, while 27% said they'd question if the company was going out of business.

Mental health and wellness is also directly tied to performance and productivity, as evidenced by an extensive (and still mounting) wealth of research. Indeed, — according to the [World Health Organization](#), an estimated 12 billion working days are lost globally to depression and anxiety at a cost of US\$1 trillion per year in lost productivity. In Japan, compensation claims for mental health conditions reached record highs in 2021.

## The severity may be new, but the responsibility to improve mental health is not

Of course, workplace leaders have been prioritizing employee mental health for decades. But it is garnering critical new attention in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic — as evidenced by multiple studies. According to a [Corporate Wellness Magazine survey](#) of more than 1,000 full-time employees and 250 employee benefits leaders across the U.S., organizations are well aware of the greater need for workforce mental health resources and support and consider it a priority.

## Survey responses, by the numbers:

**92%** of respondents said providing mental health support became a higher priority for their company in 2021 — and 93% expect it to stay that way over the next three years

**66%** of benefits leaders consider “supporting employee mental health” one of the top challenges they face in their jobs

**84%** of employees said it’s important that a prospective employer offer “robust and comprehensive mental health benefits”

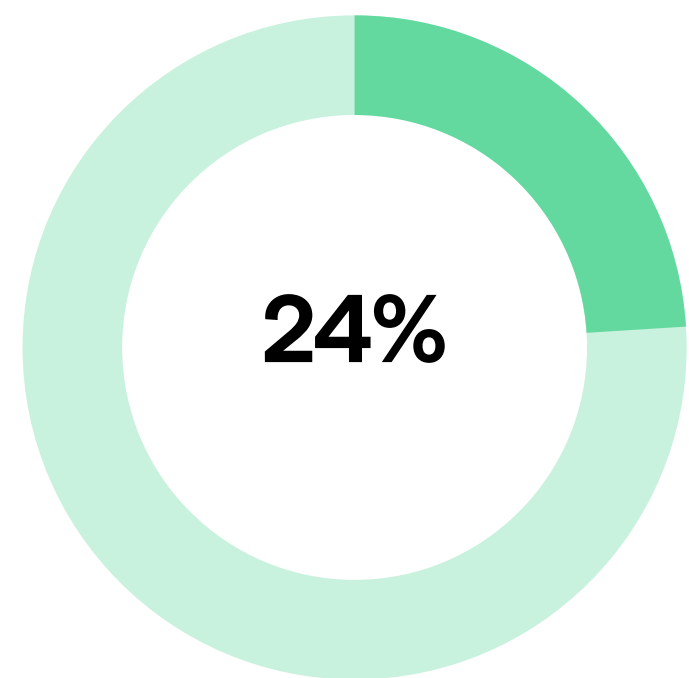
## The odds are stacked against most wellbeing programs

But there’s a critical gap to overcome between intention, strategy, and success.

Solving the mental health crisis at work is a tall order by any standard — especially given the odds facing even the most well-intended and highly-funded employee wellbeing programs.

According to a [Gallup poll](#), only 24% of employees at companies offering wellness programs actually participate in them.

Establishing a mental fitness program that employees and managers alike can sustain, is key to improving workplace relationships, wellbeing, and performance.





## Chapter 3:

Three key practices for improving  
mental fitness and wellbeing at work

There's no question that long-term, systemic changes are needed in many sectors to reduce the mental burden on workers in this post-pandemic world. But there's plenty that can be done at the root level with individuals and teams to help mitigate stress, prevent burnout, and protect the mental wellbeing of professionals in the workplace.

A neuroscience-based approach to mental fitness training can help individuals and teams to intercept sabotaging thought patterns and generate a positive mindset. Organizations with wellness programs and other change initiatives in place today can certainly improve aspects of employee wellbeing, but these approaches often don't address the root causes of stress, anxiety, and conflict — or create long-term change.

## **What successful companies are doing to create positive change that lasts**

### **Treat root causes, not symptoms by nurturing a growth mindset.**

Everyone has their own set of negative behaviors — also called saboteurs — but by treating the symptoms of that sabotage, as opposed to the underlying motivation, we disempower people from overcoming them.

With thoughtful workshops and other program elements, organizational leaders can help employees recognize limiting fixed mindsets. Together, they can activate and nurture growth mindsets where dedication and hard work can help them achieve all new heights.



*“Are we paying attention only to rewarding an employee for results, or are we looking also at process? Is this person coming from a growth mindset, i.e., are they taking smart, reasonable chances and creative risk, and when there is a setback, are they holding themselves accountable, learning, and growing from it — and helping other people do the same?”*



Shirzad Chamine  
Founder & CEO of Positive Intelligence

### **Build mental fitness with easy, but impactful, exercises.**

Bad habits live in our minds in the form of neural pathways — aka mental muscles — that automatically generate our old responses.

But you can't fight muscle with insight alone. It takes muscle to fight muscle, and no book, 2-day workshop, or coaching session can build up enough strength for the new way to counter the old way.

True transformation requires 20% insight generation and 80% muscle building. A simple daily repetition, performed over an extended period of time, can convert healthy new insights into the new mental muscles it takes to achieve and sustain positive mental health.

## Unite people around a common platform and language.

Repetition is key to mastering any new pursuit — including mental fitness. The problem in most organizations is that our efforts are being spread in too many directions. So we end up chasing the 7 habits of effective people, the 6 ways to sell better, the 5 steps to greater happiness, and the 3 ways to reduce stress — and therefore lack a common language or framework that can unify these efforts.

But when mental fitness programs start everyone at the same place, you can develop a shared language and understanding, together. This purposeful alignment feeds buy-in and helps feed a culture of mutual accountability.

Together with data-driven metrics and tools, individuals and teams alike can more effectively chart their own progress and identify opportunities to improve.

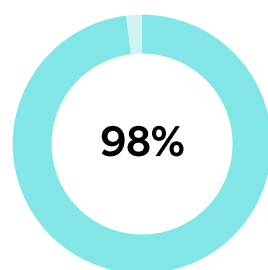




To effect lasting, positive change, organizations must get to the root of what's keeping their employees from reaching their full potential. They must continuously build and exercise their mental muscles. And, they need a common platform and language to unite their teams in their efforts. The Positive Intelligence program helps organizations solve for these common challenges in order to create positive change that improves both performance and wellbeing.

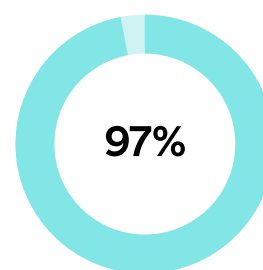
The program represents a breakthrough in the ability to raise Emotional Intelligence (EQ) across an organization, helping individuals and teams more effectively address the root causes of problems. Program participants see sustained, measurable improvements in 17 of 18 EQ competencies.

### Some of the most notable improvements:



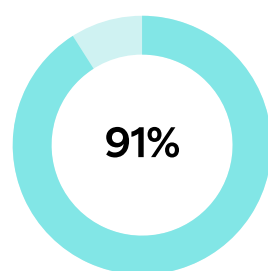
98%

improve their accurate self-assessment competency



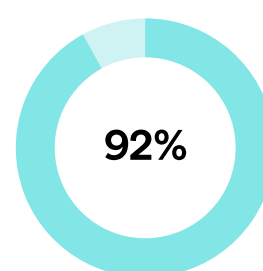
97%

increase their empathy competency



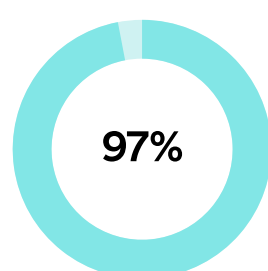
91%

are more optimistic



92%

boost their teamwork and collaboration



97%

experience growth in emotional self-awareness





## Positive Intelligence (PQ): Build and support high-performing teams

Most attempts at positive change fail because we stop at insight and don't recognize the power of building new behaviors incrementally over time. Sustained change toward a more positive mind requires laying down neural pathways to form new habits through consistent daily practice. And that's what the Positive Intelligence PQ Program empowers you to do.

### Positive Intelligence provides the tools and operating system to thrive in high-pressure environments.

Our trusted, science-based system starts with a seven-week app-guided program focusing on strengthening your team's mental fitness muscles. Offerings include daily practice, weekly video sessions, progress measurements, and community support like pod meetings — all designed to drive performance and wellbeing alike.

Triple Purpose



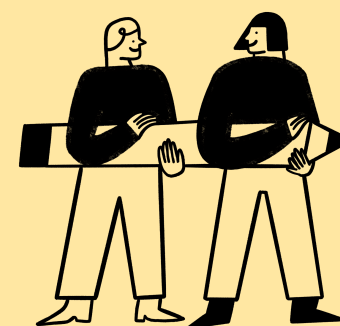
Earned Trust



Healthy Conflict



Mutual Accountability



# Chapter 4:

The power of growth mindset at work



For many organizations, COVID-19 cast a hard light on employee wellbeing — and the need for more dedicated mental health support.

One Fortune 100 tech firm seized the opportunity to improve individual wellbeing and in turn, foster better relationships and performance across its global workforce.

## How one company sparked a mental fitness movement

### **The challenge**

Like other leading firms, the tech giant decided to double down on employee wellbeing in direct response to the pandemic. Having experimented with a range of wellbeing-related programs in the past — from sleep programs to nutrition and wellness apps — the leadership team knew they would need a more effective, science-based approach to break down the stigma about mental health and achieve lasting positive change. Enter, Positive Intelligence's approach.

### **The solution**

In May 2022, as part of its “90 Days to a Better You” campaign launch, the company invited employees to join Positive Intelligence's interactive mental fitness program. Thanks to a combination of inspiring messaging, demonstrable results, and tailored incentives, team leaders expected roughly 800 participants to get involved — only to be blown away when a whopping 5,500 members of the team requested to participate. Together with PQ partners, corporate leaders created four distinct cohort programs to fulfill the widespread interest. Within these larger cohorts, they enlisted pod leaders to lead smaller subgroups of 12 people each, helping facilitate connection and results.

The program began with six weeks of intensive, app-guided practice, focused on strengthening the individual's mental fitness muscles to form new lasting habits — through daily practice, weekly video sessions, progress measurements, and community support like weekly pod meetings with accountability partners.

Thereafter, team members moved into the self-guided, self-paced Grow module, tapping into new content each month. Additionally, the group participated in the Teams module which included six sessions for the larger team to reflect on the journey, together.

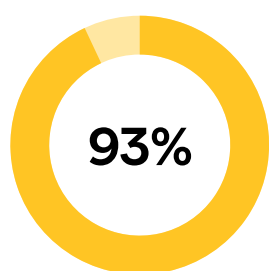


*“Just 15 minutes a day  
has improved my life drastically.”*

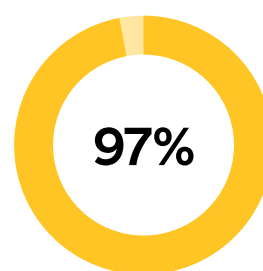
PQ-Powered Teams participant

### The results

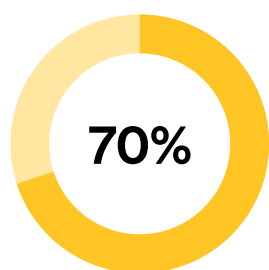
So far 92% of the employees who registered have actively participated in PQ-Powered Teams, with 3,200 employees spread across more than 50 countries.



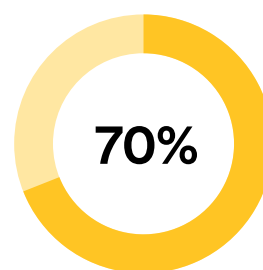
of respondents say they  
manage stress better



have strengthened their  
emotional intelligence



feel more engaged  
at work



say their work relationships  
have improved

Noting employees' appreciation and interest, corporate leadership extended the program invitation to up to four family members, too.

Together, employees and managers alike are helping realize a culture centered on purpose, earned trust, healthy conflict, and mutual accountability.



Today, the corporation's commitment to mental health is clear and ongoing. By increasing individual wellbeing, the company is destigmatizing mental health care while helping foster better relationships and performance. Employees are demonstrating higher levels of engagement, resolution, and innovation, and using shared language that makes it easier and more enjoyable to get to the heart of the matter.

## Numbers talk

Across the board PQ-Powered Team members are:

**47%**  
↑  
likelier to say that their colleagues are trustworthy

**65%**  
↑  
likelier to say that the company supports risk-taking

**34%**  
↑  
likelier to feel a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the company

**49%**  
↑  
likelier to say that the company fosters innovation

*“This program is vital to anyone wanting to reset their team and to establish trust within a team. Even large corporations can do this; I was a Pod leader and found it very fulfilling, and I plan on continuing my learning.”*

Kathy C., HP







## Shape a culture of mental fitness in your workplace

Most teams are suffering from the invisible effects of today's mental wellness crisis. They work too hard; experience too much conflict, friction, and stress, and vastly underachieve their potential.

But forward-looking corporate leaders can turn the table across their enterprise — and beyond.

Positive Intelligence delivers mental fitness training to help corporate teams achieve their full potential for performance and happiness, through 15 minutes a day of app-guided practice. With this guided, tactical approach, your company's employees will go on to be happier, more engaged members of your teams, as well as in their own communities, too.

### The Positive Intelligence Annual Program

 <b>Foundations Module</b>	intensive practice with your pod, building your three mental fitness muscles  months 1–2
 <b>Grow Module</b>	self-guided and self-paced module following Foundations, with new content released monthly  months 3–12
 <b>Teams Module</b>	self-guided and self-paced module following Foundations, with new content released monthly  months 3–12



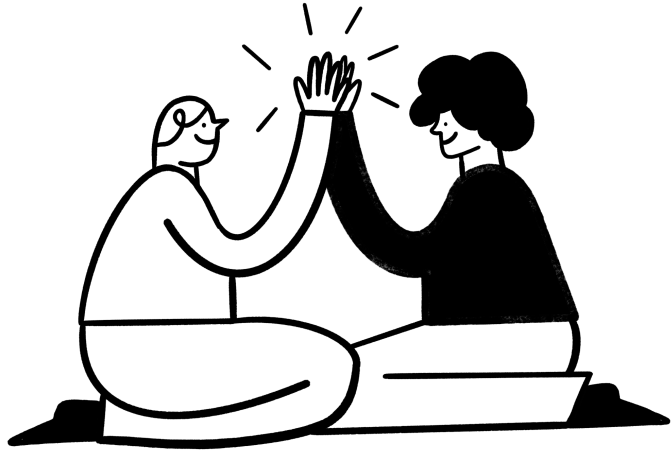
Learn more →



Create a mental fitness program for your team:  
All you need to know in 3 minutes



We've helped teams at leading brands around the world  
unlock their full potential — we can help you too!



*“The Positive Intelligence program has been the single most impactful activity for me and my mental well-being through the Covid pandemic and I know I’ll carry the tools learned well into my life.”*

Tom Cooney,  
Research and Development Manager  
Hewlett-Packard Inc.

## Ready to power your team’s potential?

Schedule a discovery call with Positive Intelligence today.

Let’s talk



<https://www.positiveintelligence.com>