

Presenter:
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Mental Health Without a Wellness Budget

What HR Can Do With What You Already Have
Practical strategies for HR to support employee wellbeing



About Me:



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Mental Health Without a Wellness Budget

OBJECTIVES:

- Reframe workplace mental health as a work design issue rather than a wellness funding issue.
- Identify four operational levers that drive preventable stress
- Apply simple language shifts that reduce defensiveness and improve performance conversations.
- Translate mental health initiatives into executive-ready business language.
- Develop a 90-day, zero-budget action plan to pilot and measure impact.

Polls:

**Time for
some
polls!!**



Facts-2024 Mind the Workplace by MHA

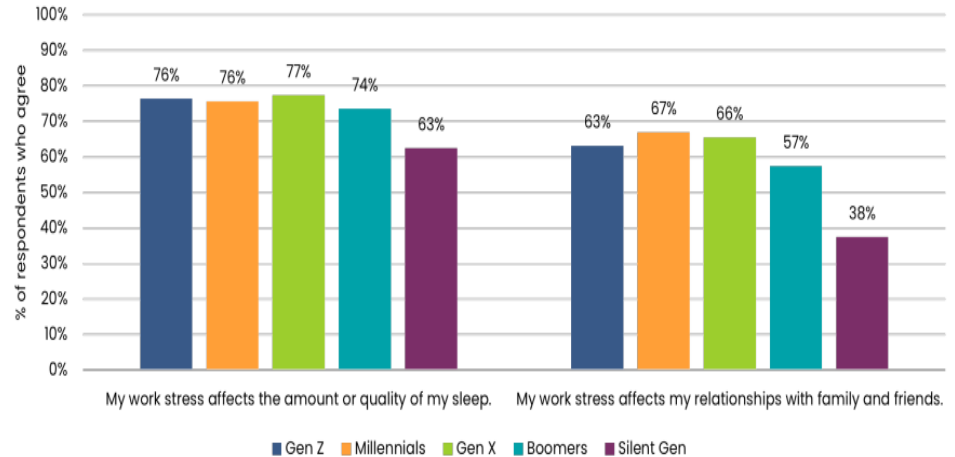
76% of employees agreed that work stress impacts their sleep and relationships

All generations of employees report similarly high rates of work stress negatively impacting their sleep and relationships

“The broader organization I work for has many initiatives to support employees and their well-being. Still, the individual units do not always implement these strategies successfully, and there is wide variation among units regarding culture.”

[2024 workplace wellness research | Mental Health America](#)

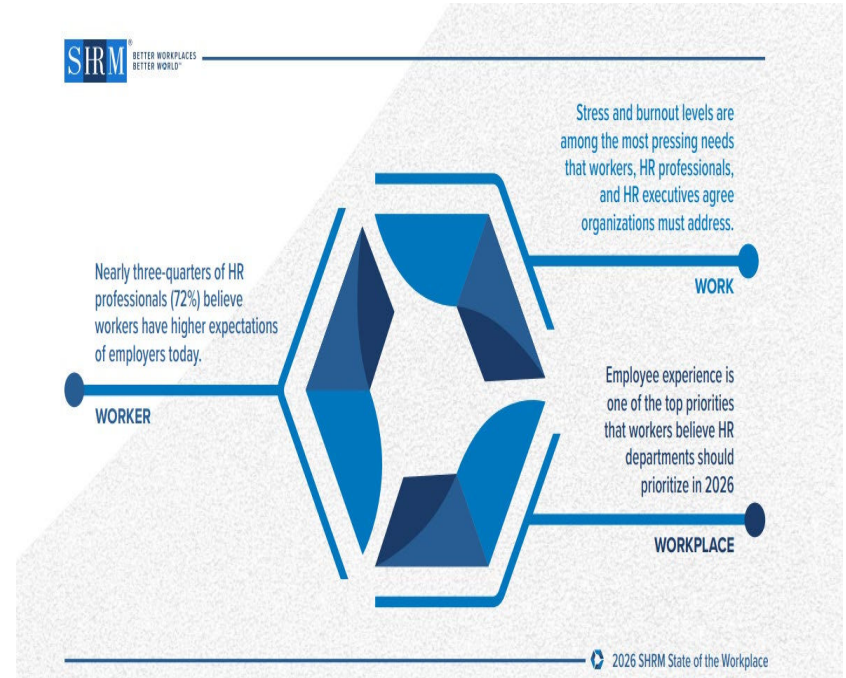
Impact of Work Stress by Generation



Facts-2026 State of the Workplace SHRM

Key Findings:

1. Employee stress and burnout are among the top needs that workers, HR professionals, and HR executives agree organizations must address.
2. Workers acknowledge employers' efforts to address needs, but both (EE and ER) agree more can be done.
3. 1/3 of Employees rated Employee Experience and a holistic approach to enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction as a critical area for HR to prioritize in **2026-beating out Pay/Benefits**



Facing Budget and Leadership Limitations



Budget and Resource Constraints

HR leaders often face budget limitations and lack funding for new wellness initiatives.

Leadership Reluctance

Leadership reluctance to fund 'soft' programs reduces support for employee well-being initiatives.

Operational Barriers Focus

Shifting focus to removing operational obstacles helps reduce stress and improve productivity.

Aligning With Executive Priorities

Pragmatic approaches that align with executive priorities address limitations faced by HR teams.

Operational Drivers of Mental Health

STRESS DRIVERS

- **Ambiguity**
- **Chronic overload**
- **Reactive scheduling**
- **Decision confusion**
- **Meeting sprawl**

PERKS (CROSSED OUT)

- **Yoga stipends**
- **Meditation apps**
- **Wellness weeks**

**Instead of Building a Wellness
Ecosystem...
Reduce Preventable Stress**

Mental Health=Work Design

The 4 Levers



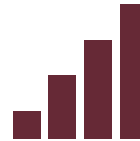
Workload clarity



Meeting &
Communication
Hygiene



Manager Micro-Skills

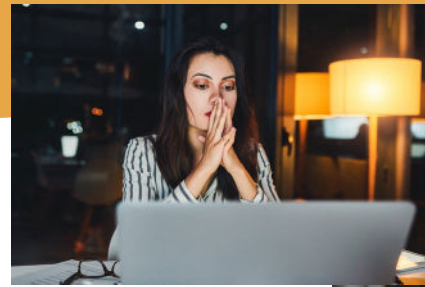


Operational Data

Lever # 1: Workload Clarity

Clarity Reduces Anxiety Faster Than Any Program:

- Weekly Top 3 Priorities
- Eliminate 'everything is urgent'
- Pilot no-meeting focus blocks



Lever # 2: Manager Micro Skills

You Don't Need a 6-Hour Training - You Need a 45-Minute Toolbox

- Notice performance shifts early
- Ask: “What’s getting in the way?”
- Normalize breaks and boundaries



Language shift-example

Instead of “Why isn’t this done?”

Try “What’s getting in the way?”

Lever # 3: Meeting Hygiene

Burnout is often calendar-based

- Shorten meetings to 45 minutes
- No agenda = no meeting
- Cancel when no decision is required
- Define decision rights
- No after-hours email expectation
- Institute a meeting free day



Lever # 4: Data you already have



DATA SOURCE

INDICATOR

Absence trends

Potential stress

Overtime hours

Workload overload

Turnover by supervisor

Manager impact

Workers' comp stress claims

High stress

Exit interview themes

Root causes

Speak Executive: *Translating Wellness to Business Outcomes*

WELLNESS LANGUAGE

EXECUTIVE LANGUAGE

Burnout

Preventable performance loss

Psychological safety

Error reduction & innovation flow

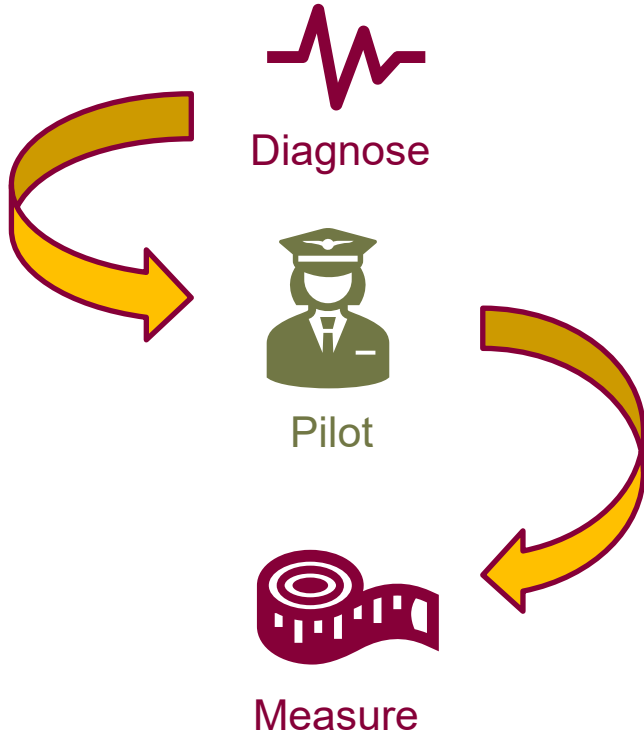
Wellness investment

Retention protection

Mental health training

Supervisor risk management

The Game Plan-90 DAY Zero Budget Action Plan



- Find the Data, Ask the question (Lever 4)
- Using the data; identify workload stressors and identify targeted interventions. (Lever 1-4)
- Pilot some interventions to reduce the stressors for month (Lever 1-3)
- Measure the impact and report out to Leadership

What This Is Not.

Clarifying The Approach

Not Adding New Vendors

The approach avoids introducing new vendors or complex culture changes, focusing instead on simplicity and clarity.

Reducing Operational Friction

It aims to reduce barriers to productivity by streamlining processes and enhancing well-being effectively.

Setting Realistic Expectations

Clarifying what the initiative is not helps HR avoid resistance by setting practical and achievable goals.

Actionable Practical Changes

Focus on actionable changes that improve employee experience without increasing workload or resources

Empowering HR to Drive Change:

Mental Health as Work Design

Mental health challenges in lean organizations stem from work design, not budget issues.

HR's Control and Impact

HR professionals have significant control over work design to reduce stress and stabilize productivity

Actionable Operation Levers

Using existing operational levers, HR can protect employee retention and foster a healthier workplace.