



LEADING FOR WELLNESS AT WORK

Dr. Katina Sawyer
Assistant Professor of Management
The George Washington University School of Business
Co-Founder, Workr Beeing

A little about me...

- Assistant Professor of Management at GWU, soon to be Associate Professor of Management at University of Arizona
- PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and in Women's Studies from the Pennsylvania State University
- Researching aspects of wellness and related outcomes at work for the last decade
- Passionate about how to create happy, healthy, and thriving workplaces in organizations
- Workr Beeing blog and podcast (www.workrbeeing.com; @workrbeeing)

Agenda

- Stress in the Pandemic
- What is Stress?
- What is Recovery?
- What is Wellness?
- Why is Wellness Important at Work?
- Leading for Wellness Research Design
- Leading for Wellness Research Findings
- Action Planning
- Q&A

Stress in the Pandemic



What is Stress?

“A mismatch between your current environment and your desired environment”



What stressors are
your employees
struggling with right
now?



Stress in the Pandemic

25%

One quarter of adults are feeling lonelier now than they did before the pandemic

63%

Over sixty percent of people feel more helpless than before the pandemic started

Salary

Lack of Growth

Heavy Workload

Long Hours

Top Work Stressors

Unrealistic Job
Expectations

Undefined Job
Expectations

Job Insecurity


Lack of
Advancement

Inflexible Hours

Lack of
Participation in
Decision Making



Stressors Outside of Work



RELATIONAL ISSUES

Example: conflict with friends or family members

CAREGIVING STRESSORS

Example: childcare challenges

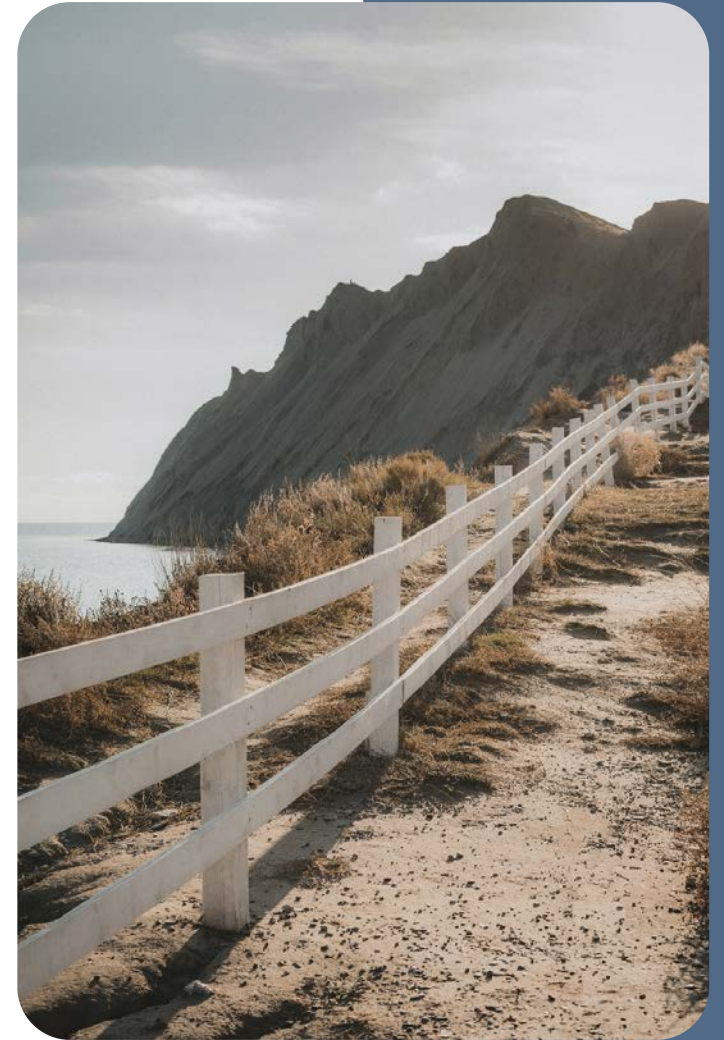
MATERIAL STRESSORS

Example: living paycheck to paycheck



Lack of Boundaries

There are fewer boundaries now between work and life, making all of these stressors even more strongly linked to well-being at work



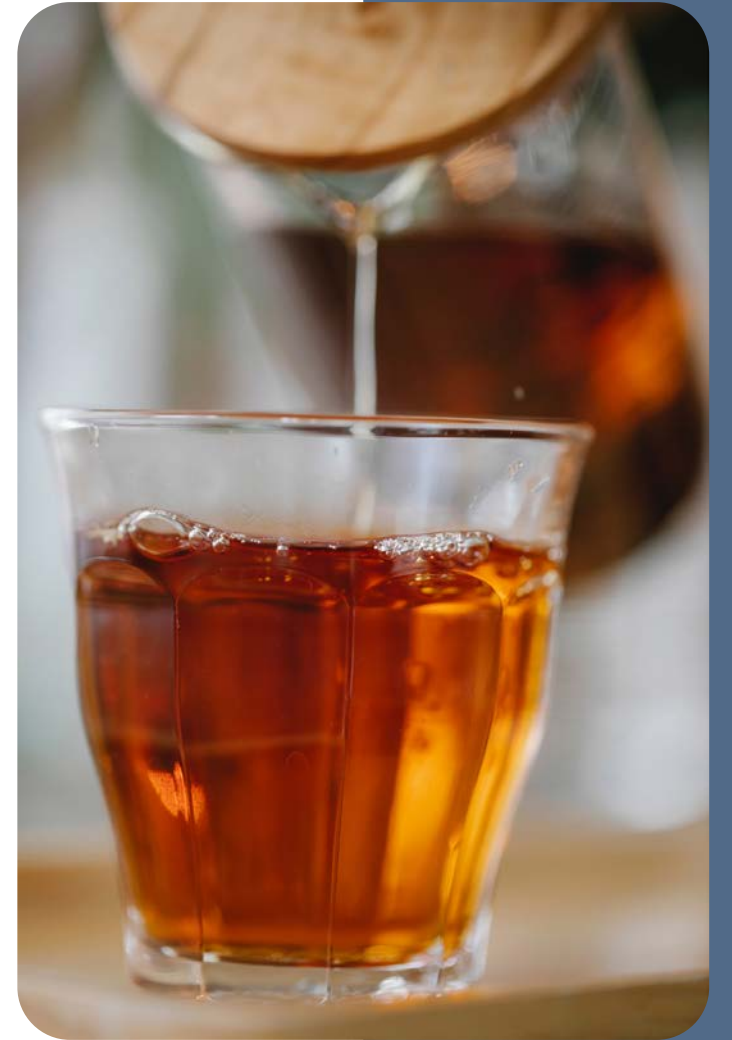
What is Recovery?





Recovery is...

A way to restore lost resources outside of work to improve subsequent well-being and performance



You Can't Promote Wellness if You Aren't Role Modeling it!

- Finite amounts of time, physical energy, and mental energy
- Conservation of Resources Model
- Stress occurs when resources are lost
- Conflict occurs when resource loss is perceived
- Acquired resources buffer this

Are you currently role modeling
wellness?

Why or why not?

When are you best able to do so?

What is getting in your way?





Detachment



Mastery



Control



Relaxation

4 Types of Recovery

Tips for Detachment

- Turn off email notifications after hours
- Stop looking at your phone during life tasks
- Put away your phone or laptop
- Schedule downtime for life tasks
- Practice mindfulness!

Tips for Mastery

- Think about activities that really make you feel connected to who you are
- Schedule time to engage in those activities each day
- Try to level up!
- Join in activities with friends
- Celebrate your wins



Tips for Control

- Be conscious about how you're using your time
- Schedule time for yourself and honor those commitments
- Let go of others' expectations when you can
- Set a bedtime
- Delegate tasks if possible

Tips for Relaxation

- Take a walk in nature
- Spend time with friends or family
- Listen to music
- Meditate (even 2 minutes helps!)
- Go to a park or a place with a nice view

What is Wellness?

“The active pursuit to understand and fulfill your individual human needs—which allows you to reach a state where you are flourishing and able to realize your full potential in all aspects of life. Every person has wellness aspirations.”

Our research shows that work wellness encompasses 6 main areas...

- Work-Life Balance
- Mental Health
- Emotional Health
- Physical Health
- Financial Health
- Meaningful, Manageable Work

Yet, wellness is personalized.

Some employees value some forms of wellness more than others.

Wellness is not one-size-fits-all.

Why is Wellness Important?

- **35%** of employees feel stressed out during the course of their workday
- Only **50%** of employees feel they have the resources necessary to meet their wellness needs at work



When employees aren't well...

- Burnout and turnover increase
- Job attitudes (engagement, trust, satisfaction) and performance decrease
- Illness and absenteeism rise
- Positive PR/boosterism decline

Leading for Wellness Research Design

- If leaders want to promote health, happiness, and well-being at work, how might they do that?
 - Currently, the literature lacks a framework
- In-depth interviews with employees who have exemplary managers/leaders in supporting their wellness
- Verbatim transcription and rigorous data analysis
- 49 interviews conducted to date

Flexibility

- It doesn't matter where or when work is done, as long as it gets done well and on time
- Allowing for flexible start and end times for the work day
- Allowing people to work where they want if possible
- Cultivating a deliverables-focused culture

Protection

- Ensuring that reserved time on calendars is not “stolen” from employees
- Pushing back on other teams attempting to delegate work to others inappropriately
- Distributing additional workload fairly – and not always to the same people
- Taking “heat” from others in the organization so that it doesn’t filter down to your team
- Standing up to anyone who mistreats team members, no matter who they are

Creating Boundaries for Working Hours

- Reminding employees that they should disconnect and recover during the evening and on the weekend
- Encouraging employees to use their vacation days – and leaving them alone when they do
- Scheduling emails so disconnected time isn't interrupted

Decreasing Overwork

- Creating realistic expectations
- 40 hour/week mentality
- Listening when employees are stretched thin
- Remembering that little requests can add up
- Workload should be level appropriate

Providing Growth and Recognition

- Learn what employees want to do with their careers and provide appropriate interpersonal/personal resources to develop them along that path
- Suggest new learning opportunities that are tailored to the employee/provide resources for such opportunities
- Tell employees when they are doing a good job, both publicly and privately
- Promote a culture of gratitude and interpersonal support in your teams
 - Can be reciprocal!

Supporting Physical and Mental Health

- Encouraging employees to take walking meetings or to use walking desks
- Not requiring use of video for all/most meetings
- Allowing employees to truly disconnect during sick days
- Being understanding about physical and mental health challenges
- Talk about mental health challenges in order to decrease stigma
- Being creative about coming up with ways to encourage inclusive, healthy group activities

Offering Individualized Support

- Setting time aside for 1-on-1 meetings to learn about employees' unique wellness needs
- Asking the right questions (not prying) and providing broad support
- Making it clear that employees can feel free to discuss wellness concerns and making space for these conversations to occur
- Listening and reacting to employee concerns, either in a group setting or in an individual setting

Being Inclusive

- Remember that all employees' experiences are not the same
- Ensuring that you listen to and learn from employees who have different experiences on the team than yours
- Look for your blindspots!
- Educate yourself on groups that you know little about and reflect on how you might be overlooking areas in which you don't personally have to pay much attention

This all requires...

Leader creativity

Leader vulnerability

Leading by example

Action Planning

What can you do to ensure that your employees are better supported in their...

- Work-life balance?
- Mental health?
- Emotional health?
- Physical health?
- Financial health?
- Manageable, meaningful work

Write down one thing you can do in each area to improve.

Put one action on your calendar to get started on each step you'd like to take.

Action Planning

What can you do as a leader to ensure that you are being more:

- Creative?
- Vulnerable?
- Exemplary?

Write down one thing you can do in each area to improve.

Put one action on your calendar to get started on each step you'd like to take.

Thank You!

Questions?

katina@workrbeeing.com

www.workrbeeing.com

[@workrbeeing](https://www.instagram.com/workrbeeing)