



# THE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE STRESS

THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
IN CORPORATE WELLNESS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

77%

OF U.S. WORKERS  
EXPERIENCED  
WORK-RELATED  
STRESS IN THE  
LAST MONTH

### Seventy-seven percent of U.S. workers

experienced work-related stress last month. Study after study shows that stress levels are higher than ever before and increasing, compounded by external and macroeconomic pressures. The problem is that high employee stress levels not only impact mental and physical health, but also workplace morale, productivity, efficiency, and even bottom-line performance.

Many companies have responded with much-needed mental health care to address stress-related and other mental health challenges. But there may be more that we can do. Physical activity and fitness are sometimes overlooked but highly effective at working alongside mental health support to boost energy, focus, and overall employee satisfaction.

Recent studies have shown that sustained physical activity has the ability to improve focus, boost energy, increase engagement, reduce stress, and more. The **American Psychological Association** (APA) found that 53% of adults say they feel good about themselves after exercising and 30% say they feel less stressed. Interestingly, it may only take 20 minutes of brisk walking per day to **lower the risk of depressive symptoms**.

We know Human Resources teams are challenged with rising employee stress levels and need to use every tactic and tool to help. In this guide, we will explore:

- ➔ The current state of employee stress
- ➔ Why physical activity is an essential part of the solution
- ➔ How to incentivize fitness with employee wellness programs

53%

OF ADULTS  
SAY THEY FEEL  
GOOD ABOUT  
THEMSELVES AFTER  
EXERCISING

## CHAPTER 1

# WHY EMPLOYEE STRESS IS ON THE RISE

U.S. employees are among **the most stressed workforce in the world**, next to Canada. Americans also face a compounding “stress stack” of external pressures that include mounting political divisiveness, inflation, and widespread violence.

The impact on employers is significant, with job stress costing the U.S. industry over **\$300 billion in losses** due to absenteeism (regularly missing work), presenteeism (working at a lowered capacity), diminished productivity, and accidents. An estimated 1 million workers miss work every day because of stress and healthcare costs increase accordingly. Work-related stress costs the U.S. \$190 billion annually.

Research shows a clear correlation between high employee stress and low workplace engagement. Employees who experience frequent stress are 63% more likely to feel dissatisfied at work and 40% more likely to disengage from company initiatives, goals, and teams, according to a **Gallup study**.

High stress diminishes intrinsic motivation, making employees less inclined to go above and beyond. Productivity and bottom-line metrics suffer as a result. This is why employee wellness programs that address both mental and physical health will become a competitive advantage for employers.

**\$300**  
**BILLION**  
**IN LOSSES**  
**CAUSED BY**  
**JOB STRESS**



## CHAPTER 2

# WHAT CAN HUMAN RESOURCES DO TO REDUCE EMPLOYEE STRESS?

The pandemic accelerated many developments in employee wellness. Workers now appreciate and seek out mental health support as part of their desired benefits package, according to the **APA**. While many companies have adopted these benefits, there are still some who have not and stress levels remain high.

According to Lyra Health's most recent "**State of Workforce Mental Health**" report, one in three employees say their benefits don't effectively address their mental health needs and 60% of employees say their mental health affects their work (up from 48% two years ago).

While mental health benefits are a powerful way to help employees cope with stress, anxiety, and/or depression, there is more that HR leaders can do to support employee well-being. Physical exercise, in particular, has proven effective in managing stress, improving mood, and enhancing overall health.



Recognizing the connection between mental and physical health is a critical step in creating a more holistic benefits strategy.

**60%**

**OF EMPLOYEES  
SAY THEIR MENTAL  
HEALTH AFFECTS  
THEIR WORK**

## CHAPTER 2

Surveys from the **APA** support this: 53% percent of adults say they feel good about themselves after exercising; 35% say it puts them in a good mood; and 30% say it makes them feel less stressed. In fact, a study from the **University of South Australia** found that physical activity, especially high-intensity exercise, was 1.5 times more effective at treating depression than counseling or medication.

# 30%

SAY EXERCISE  
MAKES THEM FEEL  
LESS STRESSED

The **CDC recommends** that all adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week. Yet, **roughly half of Americans** don't meet these benchmarks. Another **study** projected that meeting these guidelines would equate to \$100 billion saved globally each year. Put more simply, that's only 15 more minutes of walking each day for adults 18-64 years old.

Recognizing the connection between mental and physical health is a critical step in creating a more holistic benefits strategy. Supporting both will increase employee well-being and reduce stress in the workplace. The key is giving employees a variety of physical activity options to reduce their stress.



## CHAPTER 3

# TIPS FOR ADDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO YOUR WELLNESS PROGRAM

Incorporating physical activity into your wellness program doesn't have to be daunting. Small, incremental changes in workplace culture can signify to employees that physical activity is part of a balanced wellness approach and is valued by the company.

The key to choosing new benefits is to provide the **flexibility, variety, and experience** employees want to stay motivated and active.



## HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO GET STARTED:



### Make fitness convenient.

Today's workforce is largely hybrid. Offering physical activity benefits that include both in-person and virtual options will engage more of your employees wherever they are.



### Incentivize staying active.

Fitness and wellness challenges build community and provide accountability. A step-challenge using wearable trackers or water intake contest can help build healthier habits and team camaraderie.



### Encourage small steps that make a huge difference.

Fifteen minutes may be all your employees need. Short fitness breaks, often called "exercise snacking," can offer sustained benefits when they add up over time.



### Offer benefits that support a healthy workplace.

It may take a larger investment, but offering standing desks, smoking cessation programs, or healthy snacks in the office can significantly impact employee health.



### Select partners that offer engagement.

Everyone knows that the best fitness programs are the ones that sustain engagement over time. A partner that provides well-researched, high-quality wellness content will encourage more physical activity.



### Provide health education opportunities.

Educational courses on nutrition, stress management, pain management, or other condition-based programs will compliment any fitness program and help employees make better lifestyle choices.



### Encourage a culture of wellness.

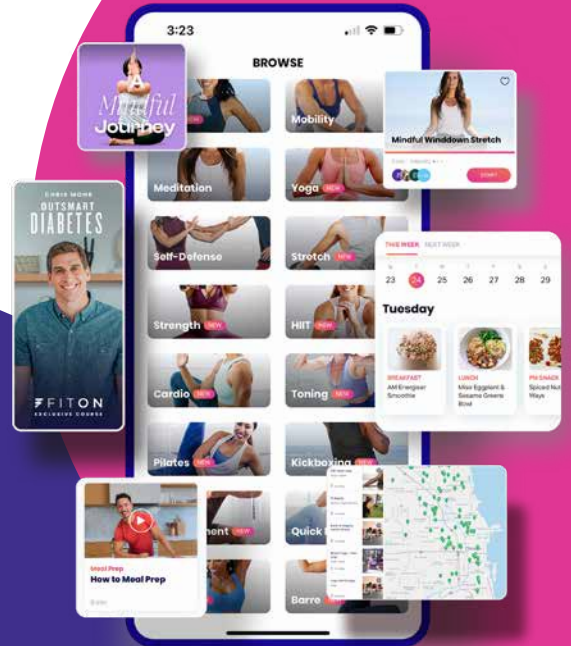
Healthy habits will only reach as far as your leadership team lets them. This group must model healthy behaviors like taking time off, disconnecting after work, and embracing work-life balance.

## JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

# HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

**Over half** of U.S. workers are stressed daily, and high employee stress is behind the most common challenges that HR teams face: absenteeism, low productivity, lack of engagement, and turnover or “quiet quitting.”

The **Society for Human Resource Management** reported that 78% of HR professionals said their top priority for 2023 was to maintain employee morale and engagement. A holistic approach to employee wellness can address unmanaged stress at multiple levels and help promote a healthier work environment for all.



## FITON HEALTH'S FIT TIPS

Our top 5 ways to increase employee physical activity:

### SHORT, SNACKABLE EXERCISE

[5-MINUTE BOOTY BOOSTER WITH BREE BRANKER](#)

[WATCH NOW](#)

### LEARN SOMETHING NEW

[LUKE MILTON'S GOLDEN RULE FOR BETTER EATING](#)

[WATCH NOW](#)

### FIND A POP CULTURE TIE-IN

[JONATHAN VAN NESS DANCE CARDIO WHEN A NEW QUEER EYE SEASON DROPS](#)

[WATCH NOW](#)

### REDUCE BARRIERS TO MOVEMENT

[BETTER SLEEP 101](#)

[WATCH NOW](#)

### JOIN A LOCAL GYM OR STUDIO

ANY FITON HEALTH FITNESS PARTNER

[EXPLORE MORE ON THE FITON APP](#)



# WE'VE CHANGED THE LIVES OF MILLIONS. YOUR TEAM IS NEXT.

FitOn Health creates healthier organizations and healthier employees by providing access to a network of exciting fitness and wellness experiences.

Since 2019, 15 million FitOn members have completed over 1 billion workout minutes. Discover how to join them!

[LEARN MORE](#)

