

# Employee toolkit and wellness roadmap

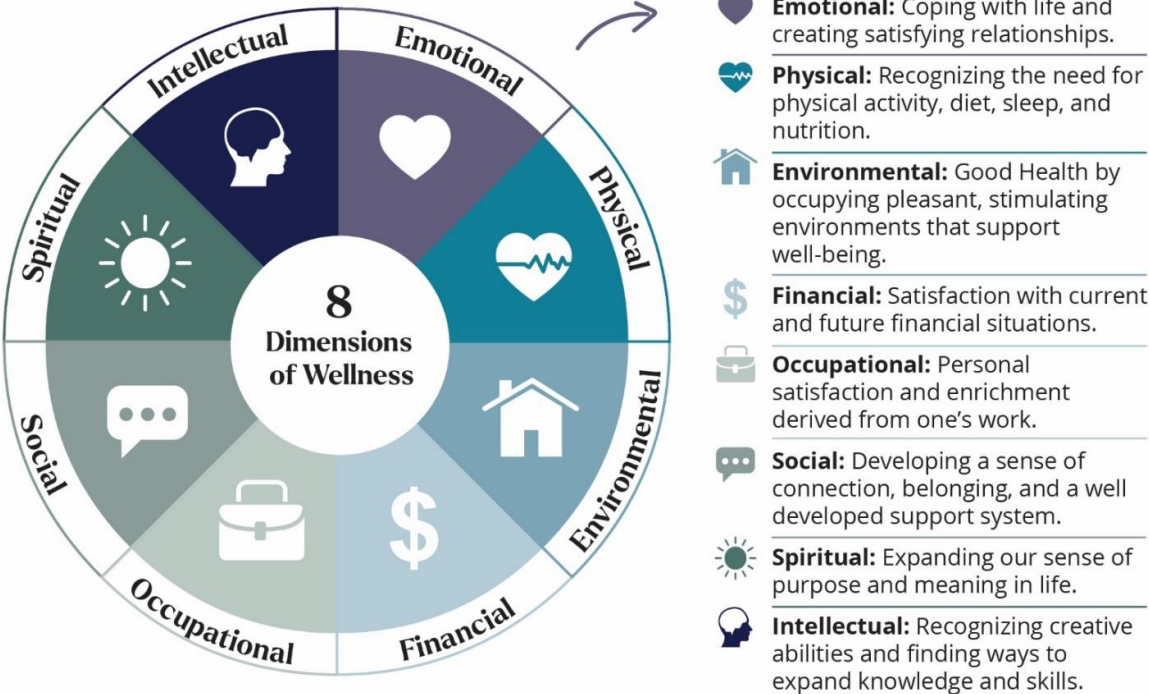
In this toolkit, you will find background information about mental health and wellness, recommended activities to address the different dimensions of wellness, resources, and materials to plan your own Take 5 break. This initiative is intended to improve employee wellbeing and protect employees from more serious mental health issues or provide tools if more serious issues arise.

## What is wellness?









Wellness is deeply personal to each of us and may look and feel differently depending on who you are. In general, wellness is simply the state of being in good health – feeling that you have a purpose, having satisfying work and personal lives, quality of relationships, feeling good physically and emotionally. In general, feeling happy. Besides being happier, being and feeling well can literally extend your life!

## Dimensions of wellness

While there are many different ways for all of us to think about wellness, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), our country's national authority on mental health, developed eight general dimensions of wellness that have been found to contribute to people having fuller and happier lives:



Note: The 8 dimensions of wellness image and associated definitions was developed by SAMHSA, and adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A wellness approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.

Dimension	What Helps
<b>Emotional</b> 	Understanding your feelings, having trusted people with whom to share your feelings, maintaining positivity in your life
<b>Spiritual</b> 	Increasing your connections to self, nature and others; take time to think about or discover your most important values and/or faith
<b>Intellectual</b> 	Life-long learning that expands your knowledge and curiosity about things that are important to you or that you want to learn more about; exploring hobbies; having creative outlets that stimulate your mind
<b>Physical</b> 	Engaging in physical activity according to your abilities to strengthen your body, getting enough quality sleep, choosing healthy and nourishing food
<b>Environmental</b> 	Creating/finding/being in environments that encourage physical and mental wellness (e.g., safety, calm, nurturing)
<b>Financial</b> 	Understanding your financial situation, supporting/establishing good financial habits and being able to plan for the future
<b>Occupational</b> 	Feeling satisfaction in things you're passionate about through work, school, volunteering and other opportunities
<b>Social</b> 	Having a sense of belonging and a reliable support system; healthy relationships with others; making regular social connections with others




## Wellness isn't a one-time thing






People who pay attention to taking care of these dimensions of wellness overall have happier, more productive, and healthier lives. Wellness isn't a one-time thing—for most people, this is a marathon, not a sprint. While there are eight different dimensions of wellness identified above, it's not practical or healthy to try to tackle all eight dimensions all at once. Read through these dimensions to see where you're feeling satisfied, where you may be feeling you need more support, or where there's room for improvement. You can also use the Employee Roadmap Template to help you identify an area or areas to start with your own wellness journey. Below are suggestions of different activities that support these dimensions of wellness in different ways to help you consider what might be helpful to you. Making changes to support wellness can be big or small. What's important is that whatever you do, whatever path you choose to begin your wellness journey, that it's a doable and sustainable one for you.

## Practices that support wellness

Although not exhaustive, below is a list of different things you can try to support each of these dimensions. Many of these activities cross more than one dimension (which is a bonus!). For additional examples, please follow this link:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf>

Dimensions	Example Activities
<b>Emotional</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yoga, meditation, or other calming and mindfulness-based activities</li><li>• Develop a gratitude list</li><li>• Connect socially with one person each day</li><li>• Meet with a mental health professional to talk about how you feel and what's on your mind—they can also help you develop your wellness plan.</li></ul>
<b>Spiritual</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meditate/pray</li><li>• Spend time outdoors, going on walks, exercising, or just sitting and enjoying nature</li><li>• Talk to a spiritual or religious leader</li><li>• Attend a spiritual or mindfulness retreat</li></ul>
<b>Intellectual</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn something new</li><li>• Take on a new hobby/rediscover an old hobby</li><li>• Take a class/seminar/watch a documentary or Ted Talk about something you've always wanted to learn more about or something you always thought would just be fun</li><li>• Do something creative</li><li>• Learn or play a musical instrument</li><li>• Listen to a podcast or series</li><li>• Read a good book</li></ul>

<p><b>Physical</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get 8 hours of sleep/night</li> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Join a gym and/or hire a personal trainer</li> <li>• Find fun ways to move your body—walk/run/dance</li> <li>• Garden</li> <li>• Take a healthy cooking/eating class</li> <li>• Get a thorough physical—talk with your doctor</li> <li>• Go to bed 30 minutes earlier</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an environment in your home that feels good to you, such as a restorative space to get rest or alone time when needed</li> <li>• Connect/find a space that nourishes you that you can get to regularly (e.g., library, coffee shop, zoo, arboretum, park)</li> <li>• Organize your space</li> <li>• Use scents (if appropriate) in your work or personal space to help you relax</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how you spend your money and set goals for how you'd like to spend your money, such as by developing a budget</li> <li>• Invest in your future by saving money in your company's retirement plan (if available)</li> <li>• Talk to a financial counselor and/or a financial advisor, which often times is included in your EAP</li> <li>• Review or develop short- and long-term financial goals</li> <li>• Take a class on managing finances</li> </ul>
<p><b>Occupational</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer to benefit both your community and yourself</li> <li>• Take on an exciting project</li> <li>• Work with your manager on creating a plan for your career path</li> <li>• Connect with what you're passionate/joyful about at work—what makes you feel good/proud about your work?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do activities above with friends</li> <li>• Reach out to people you haven't seen in a long time</li> <li>• Plan regular get-togethers with friends</li> <li>• Join a club/team (online works too!)</li> <li>• Participate in a support group</li> <li>• Spend quality, uninterrupted time with loved ones</li> <li>• Go on a date</li> </ul>

## Suggestions to continue your wellness journey

- Have an accountability partner—someone you can check in regularly with to talk about how you're doing (and vice versa!).
- Tell the people you trust and who care about you what you're doing. Letting those closest to us know we're on a particular journey often helps us stay on track and it allows those closest to us to also support our journey.
- Make a gratitude list and read it every single day. Expressing gratitude actually changes your brain structure for the better. People who make being grateful and expressing gratitude a regular practice are happier, reduce their stress, and improve their physical and mental health.
- Journal. For those of you who like to write, write about your journey! For the rest of us, doing quick two-minute gratitude journals can also be effective. Take two minutes at the end of every day to write about one thing that went well during the day and one thing you are grateful for. There are also a variety of gratitude journals that you can purchase that give you different prompts to answer.
- Do something to move you toward your goals every day. It doesn't have to be big—it may even be better if these changes are small and doable because that will keep you on the path.
- Celebrate both small and large wins on your wellness journey. Set realistic goals and reward yourself.
- Review your wellness plan regularly and make adjustments as needed. If appropriate, review with a wellness coach or qualified professional such as a mental health professional.

## Starting your gratitude journal or list

Search for “gratitude prompts” and you will discover endless lists on the internet to use either in a daily journal, or to start your gratitude list. Remember, being grateful and expressing gratitude not only makes us feel good and appreciate what we do have, it can literally change your brain chemistry and position you for a happier, healthier life (Kyeong et al., 2017). Below are some sample prompts, but please do your own searches and use the prompts that appeal the most to you. There are also numerous gratitude journals available online or for sale that also provide prompts.

### Sample gratitude journal prompts

- Today I am grateful for...
- Something that I learned was...
- Something really good that happened today...
- When I go to bed tonight, the positive feelings I want to continue to hold are...

### Sample gratitude list prompts

- I am grateful for...because...
- These things make me smile...
- This is what I really love about my job...
- My [list your choice if important people in your life] is/are really great because...

# Resources

## Mental health and substance use

In a given year, according to John Hopkins Medicine (2022), an estimated 26% of American adults are dealing with a diagnosable mental health disorder. Mental health is simply the state of feeling healthy mentally and emotionally; both foundations for feeling and being well. It's common for many of us to feel different levels of stress at different points in our lives. If you are feeling overwhelmed by what's happening around you or would like to explore what extra support with a mental health provider would look like, please connect with your health insurance provider for resources. Most health insurance cards have a customer service number you can call for more information. In addition, you can also reach out to your human resources department for information on your workplace's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Getting a mental health assessment is as important as getting a physical health assessment, and a conversation with a mental health professional can be a great start.

In addition to mental health, it's also important to occasionally take stock of your use of substances, including alcohol, medication, and other substances both legal and illegal. This is especially important if you have ever wondered whether you may be overusing/overindulging in substances or if you've ever been given that feedback by others. Talking to a qualified professional who understands substance use and abuse can help you better understand and monitor your own use and decide whether you want to make changes in your life.

Many individuals who develop substance use disorders also have mental health disorders like depression or anxiety, and vice versa. Findings from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) show that about one in four individuals with serious mental illnesses also has a substance use disorder. While one does not necessarily cause the other, mental illness can contribute to substance use and addiction, and substance use and addiction can contribute to the development of mental illness. In addition, shared risk factors such as stress and trauma can contribute to both substance use and mental health concerns (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020).

## General information on mental health

There is a plethora of mental health information on the internet, and it's important that your information is coming from trusted sources. Below are websites that can help you learn more about mental health and substance use concerns. This is to build your knowledge and should not replace a conversation with a professional.

- General Mental Health Information - <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/> (hint: start with the "Basics" tab!)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (national) - <https://nami.org/Home>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (Minnesota) - <https://www.namimn.org/>
- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – call or text 988

## Finding help

Besides talking with your health insurance provider, Employee Assistance Program and/or human resources department, many people may also find these resources helpful in accessing mental health help:

- Psychology Today therapist finder - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>
- General resources - <https://www.findhelp.org/>
- General resources for Minnesota - <https://www.211unitedway.org/> or call 211

## Apps

As the development of apps has progressed, many people have found benefit in using different apps to support their wellness journey. While apps do not replace a health assessment and treatment with a qualified provider, there are multiple benefits to using apps to support wellness, including helping monitor your wellness, personalized feedback, convenience, and accessibility. Below are examples of some highly rated apps that address a variety of different areas of wellness.

- Moodfit (overall wellness)
- MoodMission (learning coping skills)
- Sanvello (stress relief)
- Calm (meditation, sleep, relaxation)
- Happify (fun)
- Depression CBT Self-Help Guide (depression)
- Todoist (ADHD)
- Noom (weight loss/healthy eating)
- Headspace (mindfulness, sleep, stress reduction)
- Exhale (emotional well-being for and by BIPOC women)
- Meditopia (meditation to address stress, anxiety, happiness, motivation, focus)
- Results Wellness Lifestyle (overall wellness including workouts, healthy recipes)
- Deliciously Ella (healthy plant-based recipes)
- Sleep Cycle (tracks sleep to help understand and improve quality of sleep)
- Smoke Free (tracks craving/progress for those wanting to stop smoking)
- Sleep Cycle Alarm Clock (addresses sleep patterns)
- Streaks (helps you set and meet daily goals)
- Drinkaware (tracks alcohol use)
- Able (health goals, building healthy relationship with food, weight loss)
- MyFitnessPal (weight loss, fitness)
- FitOn (workouts)
- StepsApp Pedometer (tracks steps)
- Fitbit & AppleWatch apps (tracks different components of fitness; requires appropriate equipment)

## Career resources

Feeling good about our work is a key area of wellness. Below are some websites that address different components of career satisfaction.

- Career OneStop: career exploration, training, local resources - <https://www.careeronestop.org/>
- CareerAddict: comprehensive career development - <https://www.careeraddict.com/>
- Career Contessa: career website focused on women - <https://www.careercontessa.com/>
- The Interview Guys: content on a variety of career-related issues - <https://theinterviewguys.com/>
- Ask A Manager: insight about management issues - <https://www.askamanager.org/>
- CareerBliss - <https://www.careerbliss.com/>



## Sample Take 5 days

Everyone's situation is different. Some people may need more scheduled days whereas others may just need an overall plan of what they want to do each day. What is important is that you are intentional about how you want to spend these five days. We recommend trying a variety of activities, even if not all of them work. This is an opportunity to refine what works and what doesn't for you for ongoing care and/or future wellness breaks. Below are some examples to help you think about how you want to use your five days, and making your plan work for how you work. A wellness coach can help you develop your schedule, if available.

### Option 1: For those who prefer or require more structure

#### Day 1

- 8:00 – 10:00: Work on Employee Roadmap Template exercise
- 10:00 – 12:00: Hobby time
  - Write down all the hobbies you have/had interest in over the years, but never got into, and then write the pros and cons for each to determine which is best for you. You can then try out some of these hobbies throughout the rest of the week or beyond.
- 12:00 – 1:00: Lunch
- 1:00 – 3:00: Journaling instruction and writing time
- 3:00 – 5:00: Relaxation time (meditation, yoga, rest, etc.)

#### Day 2

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:30 Meditation
- 9:30 - 12:00 Hobby time
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:00 TedTalk
- 2:00 – 3:00 Family hike
- 3:00 – 4:00 Gratitude list and journal

#### Day 3

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:30 Meditation
- 9:30 – 11:30 Yoga class (with travel time)
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 3:00 Hobby time
- 3:00 – 4:00 Gratitude list and journal

## Day 4

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:30 Meditation
- 9:30 – 12:00 Volunteering
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 3:00 Nature walk
- 3:00 – 4:00 Gratitude list and journal

## Day 5

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 – 9:30 Meditation
- 9:30 – 12:00 Therapy/support group (with travel time)
- 12:00 – 2:00 Lunch with a friend
- 2:00 – 3:00 Read
- 3:00 – 4:00 Gratitude list and journal

## Option 2: For those who prefer or need more flexibility

### Things I plan to do each day:

#### Day 1

- Walk
- Volunteer at shelter
- Gratitude journal

#### Day 2

- Therapy
- Yoga
- Journal

#### Day 3

- Attend church
- Read
- Gratitude journal

#### Day 4

- Lunch with friend
- Health seminar
- Journal

#### Day 5

- Time in nature
- Support group
- Journal