

A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown in profile, clapping and smiling. They appear to be in a workshop or seminar setting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

WELLNESS AT WORK 2.0

EXPLORING WHAT'S NEW & MEANINGFUL IN WORKPLACE WELLNESS

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ABOUT TODAY

Learning Objectives

1. Identify changes to the workplace, workday and employees' needs in recent times.
2. Explore what's now needed (including specific strategies and solutions) with the intention to add massive value/positive impact to employees' lives.
3. Problem-solve, through group discussion, any other challenges impacting the effectiveness of current well-being initiatives.

HOW THE WORKDAY CHANGED

“During the pandemic, the global workforce was toiling away under the weight of chronic stress, financial insecurity, and collective grief. We became exhausted, self-efficacy decreased, and cynicism grew.

It’s no wonder that people eventually hit the wall and started leaving their jobs in droves. One of the biggest reasons why people left? Unsustainable workloads. Still, many organizations kept marching ahead. Stretch goals remained, despite employees being unable to meet the demand. Too many employees were pushed past their breaking points.

Now, employers are finally starting to listen, as employees renegotiate their social contracts with work. Mental health awareness, a focus on increasing fairness, hybrid offerings and flexible hours, more active listening, real-time feedback, and personalizing communication are all initiatives that are working to solve issues around burnout in a more upstream manner than we’ve seen before.

Leaders are beginning to have a clearer understanding that new workplace policies are not just “nice to haves,” but a necessity going forward.”

- [Harvard Business Review: The Pandemic Changed Us - Now Companies Have to Change Too](#)

FAST FACTS

From February 2020 – February 2022:

- Weekly Teams meetings increased by a whopping 252%!
- 6 billion more emails were sent ([2021 Trends Report](#)).
- We were chatting 32% more frequently.
- And the average after-hours work increased by 28%.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Not everyone is having the same experience.

- Some love work from home; some despise it.
- Some people leaned into self-care; some abandoned it.
- Some people experienced time scarcity; some experienced abundance.

The workday is forever changed.

- There may be fewer moments of transition or natural breaks.
- It's more personal. WFH gives you a window into lives.
- Some routines and workplace norms are forever gone.
- It's proven to be longer (in volume of hours).
- Boundaries may be really blurred.

THEMES AFFECTING EMPLOYEES

Each of the following themes lead to feelings of uncertainty:

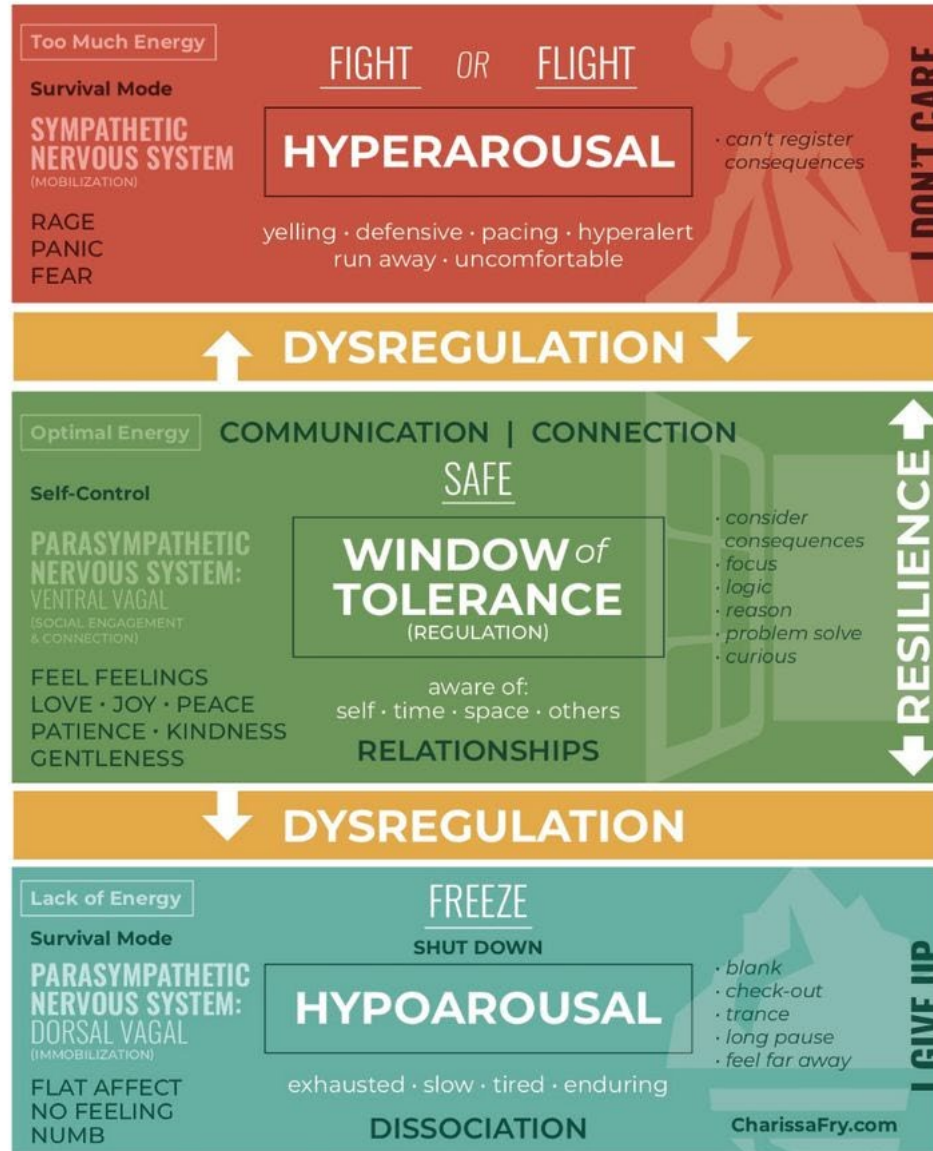
- Burnout
- Isolation/Disconnection
- Feelings of Guilt or Shame (even for healthy choices)
- Depression and/or Anxiety paired with Distorted Body Image
- Permission Confusion (self-directed and/or granted by manager)

UNCERTAINTY IN THE MIND/BODY

The Central Nervous System (CNS) and Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) are consistently triggered in the face of uncertainty.

- Fear of the unknown causes the brain to anticipate future events and leads to a state of uneasiness and apprehension.
- These future events are often perceived as potential threats and this “hijacks” the amygdala.
- The amygdala is the alarm system of the brain alerting us to danger and keeping us safe.
- Fight/flight response is activated, and we feel anxiety and stress.
- Over time, this anxiety and stress becomes chronic and can have psychological and physiological effects.

POLYVAGAL THEORY



IMPACT OF CHRONIC STRESS

Chronic stress can result in:

- Harsh self-talk.
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions and feeling distracted.
- Disengagement (as a coping mechanism) impacting productivity.
- Changes in behavior (i.e., appetite, energy level, interests and sleep).
- Psychosomatic reactions such as stomachache, headache and/or inflammation.
- A negative impact on chronic health conditions and mental health conditions.
- Overwhelming feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, anxiety, frustration and/or numbness.
- Increased use of negative coping and/or numbing activities such as drug & alcohol abuse, overeating, excessive shopping, gambling and other impulsive and/or high-risk behaviors.

Awareness & education on *healthy coping strategies* is essential to best support employees.



STRATEGIES & SOLUTIONS

“Employees are looking for employers to champion mental health and support certainty through clear policies, procedures, routines, and controlled choice.” – Lara Uher

WELLNESS AT WORK 2.0

New, positive trends in workplace wellness policy, strategy, programs & services:

- More flexibility
- Greater scalability
- Shorter implementation times
- A desire to surprise, delight & appreciate
- Whole-person considerations for greater flourishing
- Enhanced, lower-barrier access to mental health services
- Greater customization driven by unique workdays within the same organization
- Increased investment in multi-week programs/series for learning, development & skill building

SKILLSET 1: SELF-AWARENESS

Cultivating a culture of self-awareness can come with big benefits for all involved.

- Self-awareness allows you to identify, and name, the experience you're having.
- It also involves analyzing thoughts and feelings connected to uncertainty and changes within the workday.
- It allows you to practice being in the moment and accepting all feelings, even the ones that leave you feeling vulnerable.
- Strong self-awareness allows you to express feelings in a healthy manner and to understand you are not alone.

Supportive programs & services: *health coaching, counseling, mind/body practices, EQ training, challenges that encourage self-monitoring and self-reflection.*

SKILLSET 2: SELF-CARE

Ideally the workplace and workday supports employees with the 3Rs:

Routine: Predictability supports a sense of security and alleviates anxiety.

- Create a basic routine or structure of the day to cope with elements beyond your control.

Relationships: Building a strong support network is the most effective coping mechanism.

- Identify family, friends, co-workers, even pets, that “build you up” and can offer support.

Regulation: Engage in activities that help you to manage your emotions and actions.

- Choose activities that involve the senses, increase a sense of comfort and are mindful.

Supportive programs & services: *mind/body classes, fitness classes, community-based groups, workplace amenities like respite rooms and fitness centers.*

SKILLSET 3: MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness at work can dramatically transform safety outcomes, conflict management/de-escalation and presenteeism.

Mindfulness is, “awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” (Jon Kabat Zinn)

- Mindfulness is key to self-regulation and care.
- The goal of mindfulness is to stop “doing” and start “being.”
- Simple practices include grounding techniques, meditation and breathing exercises.
- Mindfulness is like flow in that you are fully engaged in the moment and task at hand.
- Most importantly, it can be practiced at work, at home and the transitional moments in between.

Supportive programs & services: *mind/body classes, art therapy, book studies.*



QUALITIES OF RESILIENT TEAMS

- ✓ Stress is part of our story, but not our identity.
- ✓ Change is part of living.
- ✓ Crises happen but can be overcome.
- ✓ How we interpret events influences the results.
- ✓ Lean in and accept pain and stress.
- ✓ See opportunity for self-discovery.
- ✓ When we practice resiliency-based skills, we feel empowered.



WHAT REALLY HELPS PEOPLE TO CHANGE?

Good news! Even the latest headlines corroborate today's content to date:

- Steven C. Hayes, PhD. (and team) analyzed 54,633 studies to learn what really helps people make a change.
- The most common pathway of change was *psychological flexibility* and *mindfulness skills*.
- Psychological flexibility is about greater awareness, openness, and values-based engagement in life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What seems to be the most valuable benefit, program or service currently offered to employees?
2. What sticking points are you currently experiencing with your existing wellness program?
3. What has been the biggest change to your wellness program over the past 2-3 years?
4. What questions do you have around implementation of new programs and services?
5. Which topics or practices from today would you like to explore further?
6. What is working well for your organization?
7. What ideas do you need help developing?

WHERE TO TURN FOR IMMEDIATE HELP

Asking for help or support IS a sign of strength. If you are looking for guidance and additional resources, please click the link below:

[Resources - NAMI Ohio](#)

Need help? Know someone who does?

- Call the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 9-8-8
- Or text HOME to 741741 to reach a volunteer Crisis Counselor.
- It's free and confidential. You'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

[CDC: Coping with Stress](#)

[MetLife: The Rise of the Whole Employee](#)

[Help Guide: Mental Health in the Workplace](#)

[Somatic Movement Center: What is Polyvagal Theory?](#)

[American Psychological Association: The Great Unknown](#)

[Psychology Today: The Most Important Skillset for Mental Health](#)

Sloan Group International. *Resilience at Work: The Three Domains*. August 11, 2020.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Connect with us directly:

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Biographical Information

Katy Tombaugh, Founder & CEO, Wellness Collective
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Katy is the Founder & CEO of Wellness Collective, a certified woman-owned business headquartered in Westerville, Ohio celebrating 15 years of service to clients nationwide.

Wellness Collective is a learning and development partner focused on health and happiness with mission to transform culture and lives. The Wellness Collective team supports a wide variety of workplaces (across industries) to develop strategies and customized programs for improving organizational and individual wellness. This mission-driven business is built on the foundation of five core values: people first, positive impact, passion, responsibility and mastery.

Katy is passionate about staying inspired and evoking that in others so that everyone wins – the business, the culture and most importantly, the people. She finds joy in ideation and exploring what's possible. This manifests in an ability to consult and lead organizations toward positive, sustainable shifts in their approach to employee health and well-being.

Her work has taken her into Fortune 500 businesses, non-profits, and schools both public and private. Katy speaks and teaches weekly to a global audience and loves every moment of it.

With a Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology from the Ohio State University, Katy's primary areas of interest and professional development have been focused on positive psychology, motivation, behavior modification, spirituality and neuroscience related to mind/body connection. She's also earned numerous certifications in tobacco treatment, behavior change, nutrition, fitness, yoga, and health coaching.

Katy serves in various board and committee roles and focuses much of her volunteering on fundraising to benefit innovative and inclusive educational initiatives, family fitness and feeding families at Thanksgiving.

She's also active with NAWBO (National Association of Women Business Owners) and is a past board member committed to advocating for women in business to have visibility and equal opportunities.

Outside of community and professional passions, you'll always find Katy on the dance floor or perhaps competing in the ballroom. She's the proud mom of two beautiful girls and six entertaining cats.

Achievement Highlights

- National Association of Women Business Owners - Member of the Year (2022)
- Author – Health & Happiness at Work (in process of publication)
- Podcast Host – Health & Happiness at Work (2021 - present)
- Master Trainer, LaBlast Fitness (2019 – present)
- Microentrepreneur of the Year in Health & Wellness (2015)

Biographical Information

Lara Uher, Licensed Clinical Social Worker- Supervisor
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Lara Uher, LISW-S earned her Master of Social Work degree from The Ohio State University and obtained her independent licensure with a supervisory endorsement. In addition, she holds a School Social Work Certificate from the Ohio Department of Education to concentrate on mental health in schools and organizations. She has coordinated programs designed to support youth with intensive social-emotional and behavioral challenges. Additionally, she has collaborated with interdisciplinary teams in schools, as well as provided professional development in the areas of Crisis Prevention/De-Escalation, Suicide Prevention, and Trauma-Informed Care and Practices. Lara specializes in the treatment of trauma using brain-based practices, neuroscience, and attachment theory.

Currently, Lara provides individual and group therapy for all ages and consults with workplaces on best practices related to employee mental health. Program development, education and skill-building continue to be a primary focus.

With over 15 years' experience in the mental health field, she integrates mind/body interventions into her practice. As a Registered Yoga Teacher—200HR and Pilates Instructor, her goal is to expand awareness of the mind/body connection to support mental health and healing through a deep sense of connection and belonging to self and others.