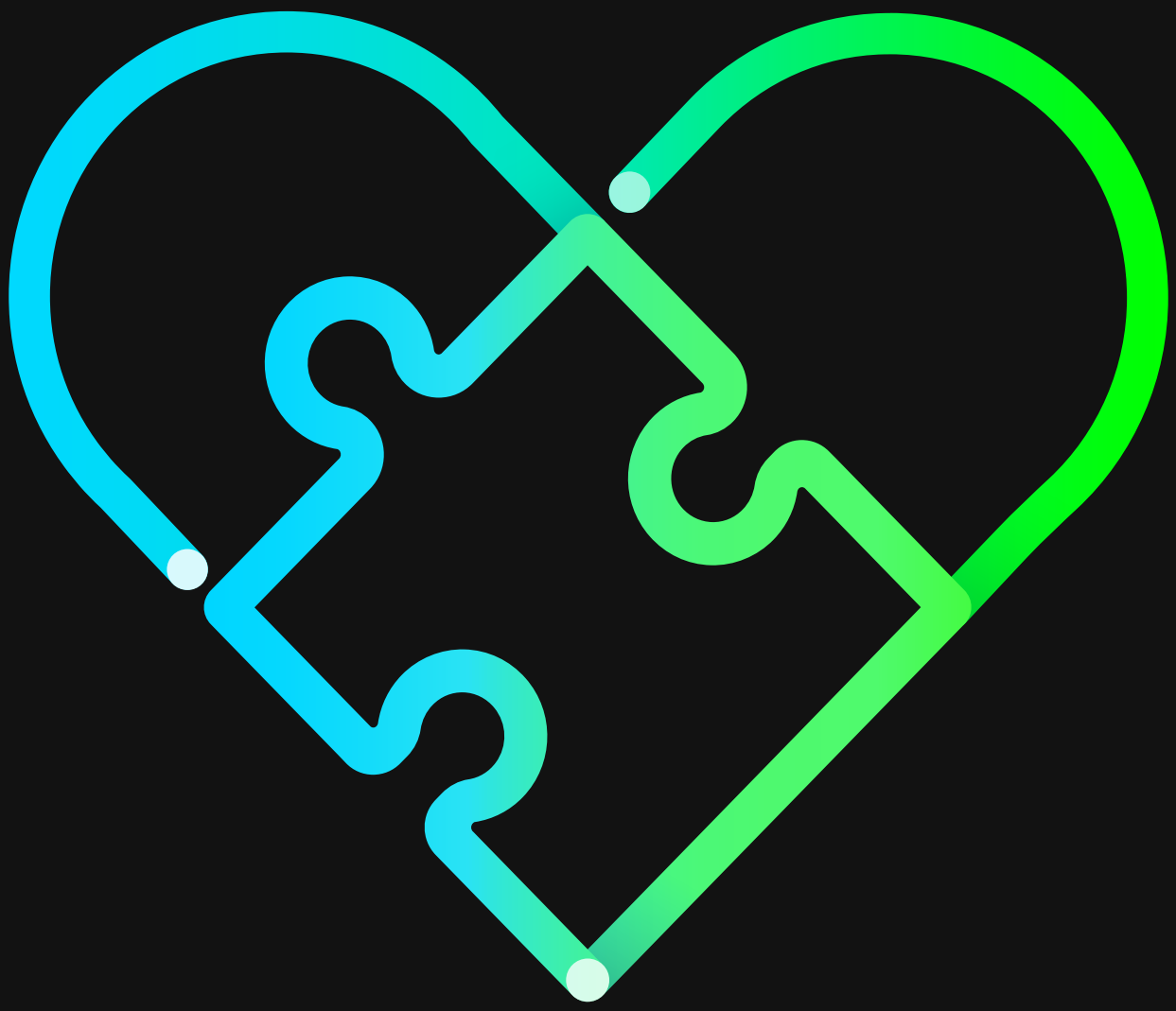
‘Sorts facts from fads, data from desire, to reveal what companies must do if they really want to improve their employees’ wellbeing.’

Professor Amy Edmondson,
Harvard Business School



Wellworking
How to make us all better at work

MindGym

Words from the wise

‘I find the psychological conclusions compelling and see value in the profiles such as “fragile thriving” and “coping” which allow for tailored solutions rather than the “one size fits all” which we know doesn’t work. A thoughtful, sensible and practical contribution to the advancement of employee wellbeing.’

Ronan Cassidy,
Chief Human Resources & Corporate Officer, Shell

‘This fascinating report shows that employers need to look beyond traditional wellbeing initiatives and focus on improving wellbeing via less obvious drivers such as certainty, autonomy and belonging. I think this is the next evolution in workplace wellbeing and will benefit employees, customers and bottom line. Well done MindGym.’

Elaine Arden,
Chief HR Officer, HSBC

‘Offers a fresh perspective, challenging conventional thinking about employee wellbeing. Highlights the imperative of a holistic approach, particularly in a time when work-life boundaries have become blurred due to hybrid work models, mental health considerations and more global, digital work environments.’

Gene Cheng,
Global Employee Experience Lead, Allianz

‘This is an amazing, science-driven, deep, focused, exhaustive point of view on the topic, with immediate and obvious consequences for solutions and interventions. The best yet from MindGym who already have an exceptional track record of delivering pioneering insights on all things culture, leadership and performance. BRAVO!’

Dr Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic,
Chief Innovation Officer, ManpowerGroup

‘I really enjoyed this fresh approach to wellness. Compelling research, original insights and practical solutions to help leaders and teams support the behaviours which help people be their best at work. I heartily recommend it to any employer who cares about their employees’ wellbeing.’

Diana Conrad,
Chief People Officer, GSK

‘I matter, my work matters. I have always been a believer in the importance of providing jobs that are meaningful: this is critical to drive a sense of personal purpose and a sense of belonging to something bigger. [MindGym’s report offers deep research and insights to demonstrate just how much impact these drivers have on employee wellbeing.]’

Yolanda Talamo,
Chief People Officer, Heineken

‘Brings much-needed clarity on the variety of factors that affect employee well-being – and which factors companies should focus on to build healthy, thriving corporate cultures. Offers practical guidance on how to integrate well-being into how we lead, manage and behave at work – I encourage all my fellow CHROs to read this.’

Amanda Cusdin,
Chief People Officer, Sage

‘Provides the data confirming why many measures companies implement on wellbeing are well-intended, but don’t bring value to the company, nor its employees. Provides, as always, a thorough analysis of what works, what will improve and what will drive a Wellworking organisation. A joy and must read for any CHRO.’

Joris J.P. Huijsmans,
EVP, CHRO, Carlsberg

‘No matter how many billion dollar placebos we dole out, 21st century science tells us that wellbeing at work depends on feeling good about our work. This groundbreaking study invites us to treat the cause rather than the symptom – workplaces that become smarter and happier make for enterprises that become winners.’

Sir Trevor Phillips,
Founding Chair, EHRC & NED, MindGym

‘MindGym’s core proposition that we need to pivot from benefits to how we work is not only right but is pragmatic and implementable. The 5 drivers for wellbeing show us what to do and the diagnostic where to focus. This work should cause all of us to rethink how we can drive for greater wellbeing in the workplace.’

Loren I. Schuster,
Chief People Officer & Head of Corporate Affairs, EVP, The LEGO Group

‘MindGym have again used their deep research and psychologist insights to shed new and important light on wellbeing as a holistic topic, but also a highly individualised one. One size definitely doesn't fit all on this subject, which isn't what most organisations will want to hear, but it’s true.’

Nigel Sullivan,
Chief People & Sustainability, Bupa

‘A tour de force in applying scientific evidence and approaches to practical, real-world organisational issues. AN interesting, stimulating and insightful piece of work from the leaders in organisational culture education.’

Dr Lasana Harris,
Professor of Neuroscience & Experimental Psychology, UCL & Columbia University

This compelling study is an eye opener for all of those who are looking to find the path towards employee satisfaction, retention, and health.

Foreword

There is little doubt in my mind that the best way to address the growing concerns about employee burnout, mental health and wellness overall, is to address the work itself.

As simple as this statement may sound, it has not been the dominant approach in recent years. This compelling study is an eye opener for all of those who are looking to find the path towards employee satisfaction, retention and health.

The report puts the emphasis right where it belongs: on the work! Its research-driven advice invites companies to find ways to make work more meaningful, which also requires them to ensure that their people managers have the skills they need to coach, guide and support employees in doing great work.

What matters is creating a positive, learning-oriented culture that supports people in delivering value, creates conditions for meaningful interactions that build energising relationships and ensures that every employee has the resources they need to do their job. Notice what isn't on this list: all of the fun perks that are unrelated to making work work as it should.

It's not about being tough or uninterested in employees' lives. It's about enabling individuals and teams to make work work.

Amy Edmondson,
Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management,
Harvard Business School

Wellworking

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Wellbeing matters to business.

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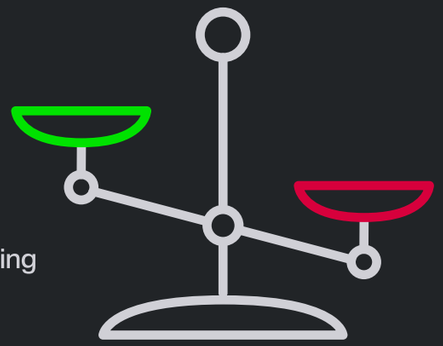
Working well or hardly working?

What most companies are doing isn't helping to improve employees' health.



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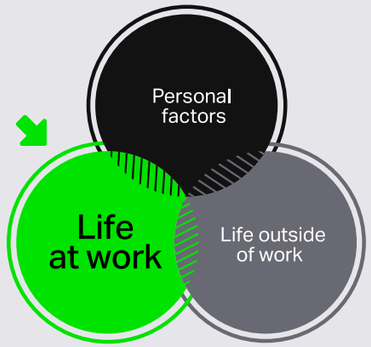
To improve wellbeing, companies need to focus on the world of work...

... rather than employees' lives outside of work.



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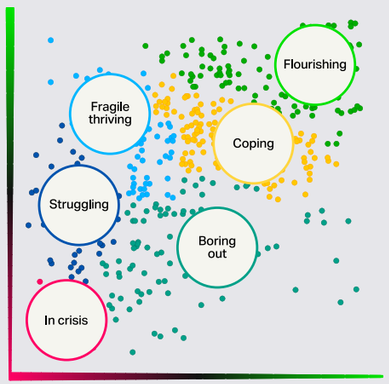
The picture of health

The six states of employee wellbeing allow us to diagnose needs and provide tailored solutions, moving more employees away from 'struggling' and towards 'flourishing'.



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The five psychological drivers of wellbeing

How to weave wellbeing into the flow of work.

- Certainty
- Competence
- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Purpose

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Three ready-made remedies

- Recover to reduce illbeing
- Reinforce to protect
- Reignite to increase wellbeing

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Get started

MindGym diagnostic and Brilliant Basics journeys.

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Case study: Sanofi

sanofi

Work can be the cause of our wellbeing woes, but it can also be the cure.

Instinct might tell us that it's work that causes problems such as depression, anxiety and stress – but the reality is that the relationship is far more complex. Work can damage our sense of wellbeing – but it can also be the cure.

Companies could stop their wellbeing initiatives tomorrow without affecting the overwhelming majority of employees' health.

The right kind of work provides us with a sense of identity, security, significance, competence and belonging, which not only makes us feel good, improving our lives outside of work, but also transforms productivity.

Company bosses know that wellbeing matters. Collectively, they spend £40bn on employee wellbeing, which is forecast to grow to £70bn by 2030.[1] Yet burnout, stress and loneliness appear to be more pervasive than ever. For all the good intent, employers' investment in wellbeing doesn't seem to be making much difference.

In one of the most extensive reviews to date, MindGym's team of psychologists have analysed more than 100 research papers and studies, spanning hundreds of thousands of participants, to separate the fads from the facts. The results suggest that it is time for a complete rethink on how companies address their employees' wellbeing.

Most companies could cut all of their current investment in wellbeing initiatives and the overwhelming majority of their employees' physical and mental health would be unchanged. This is because corporate wellbeing programmes tend to:

1. Focus on employees' lives outside of work, which employers can't do much about, rather than life at work, which they can
2. Treat the symptoms of stress while ignoring the root causes
3. Offer a smorgasbord of one-size-fits-all initiatives rather than tailored remedies
4. Give most to those who need it least, with a high self-selection bias for the fit and flourishing

Companies can be the engines of wellbeing – but only if they focus away from wellbeing perks and benefits, which may work for the few (and hopefully you're one of them), but which have minimal impact for the majority of employees. Instead, they need to focus on the area where they can have the greatest impact: life at work.[2]

Wellworking is a new, effective, scientific method to integrate wellbeing into the flow of work. It does this by:

1. Focusing companies' efforts on where they can have most impact: what it's like to work here
2. Diagnosing root causes
3. Providing tailored solutions for leaders, managers and individual contributors

Adopting Wellworking gives company leaders the scientific evidence to eliminate waste and a practical route to create an environment that successfully attracts, retains and sets up talented people to do their best work.[3]

It's not only businesses and the economy that benefit. Improving wellbeing at work can cascade into other areas of life: improving relationships with friends, family and our wider community.

How we work today impacts tomorrow, too. The workplace experience of employees who are parents directly and significantly influences their children's developmental outcomes for years to come.[4] For companies who are serious about ESG, there is no better way to deliver on 'S'.

A growing wellbeing crisis

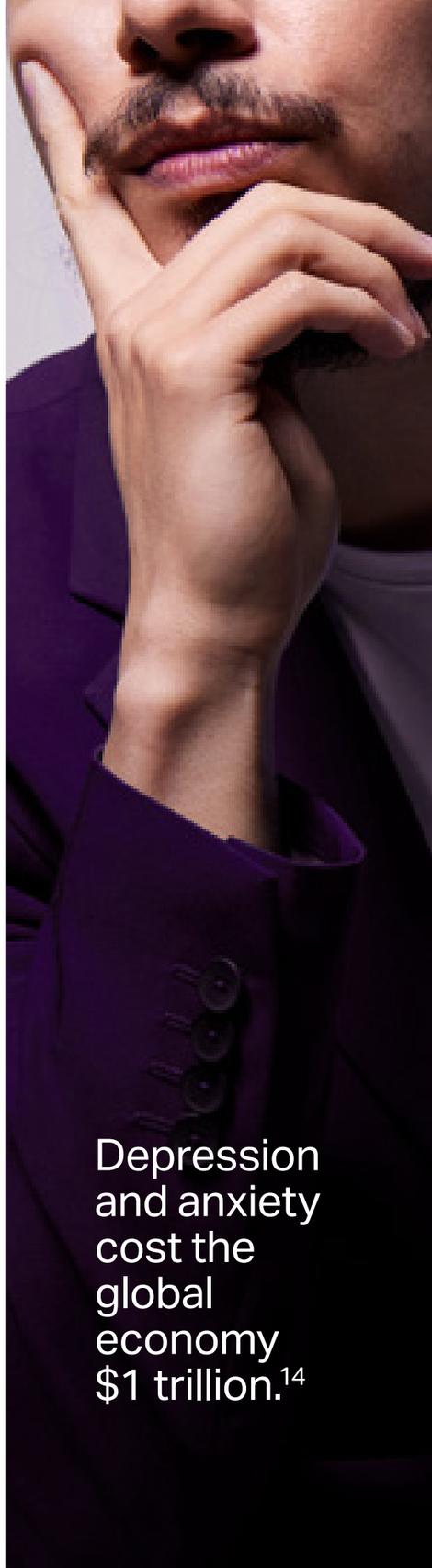
In April 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, MindGym anticipated that employees were on the edge of a 'Wellness Precipice', where the acute stress many of us experienced as we responded to the pandemic was likely to convert into chronic stress that could become a lasting problem for years to come. However bad things felt then, they were likely to get a whole lot worse.[5]

Fast forward to 2023 and that prediction has sadly been borne out across countless studies.

Employee wellbeing is in crisis on a global scale. Cases of major depressive disorder have risen by 28%, while anxiety disorder cases have jumped 26%.[6] Almost 50% of employees and 53% of managers globally report burnout, with 76% of US adults and 88% of UK adults affected.[7,8,9] Asian workers report higher levels of depression and distress than their global counterparts.[10] Meanwhile, 33% of adults worldwide are lonely, with Brazil, Turkey, India and Saudi Arabia topping the list.[11]

Quiet quitting is a growing trend, with 60–80% of employees disengaging from their work,[12] while others are having trouble detaching from their devices, maintaining boundaries and creating work–life balance.[13]

This crisis carries not only a heavy human cost but is also having a very direct impact on business.



Depression and anxiety cost the global economy $1 trillion.[14]

Wellbeing in numbers

In the UK, mental health challenges now cost employers up to £56bn a year: an increase of 25% since before the pandemic in 2019.[15]

In the US, mental health challenges are the cause of 200 million lost working days per year, costing up to £178bn annually.[16]

Absenteeism, presenteeism and employee turnover all damage productivity – but just as concerning is the issue of employees leaving the workforce altogether, and the effect this has on an already significant skills shortage.

Since the start of the pandemic, close to three-quarters of a million UK workers have opted out of the workforce due to long-term illness – with many citing mental health conditions such as depression and stress.[17,18] Mental illness, rather than physical illness, is believed to be the leading cause of long-term sick leave, with two in five companies reporting an increase in staff taking long-term leave due to mental ill health.[19]

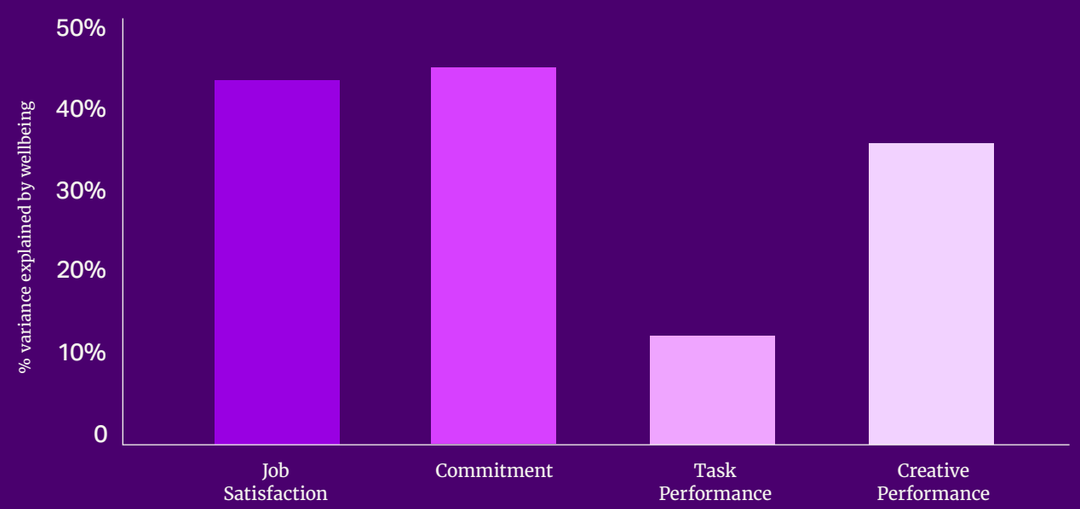
In the US, burnout is sabotaging employee retention, accounting for between 20% and 50% of staff turnover.[20]

Investing in our employees' wellbeing can help reverse the growing talent shortage: studies show that wellbeing accounts for a 42% variance in workplace commitment and a 41% variance in job satisfaction.[3]

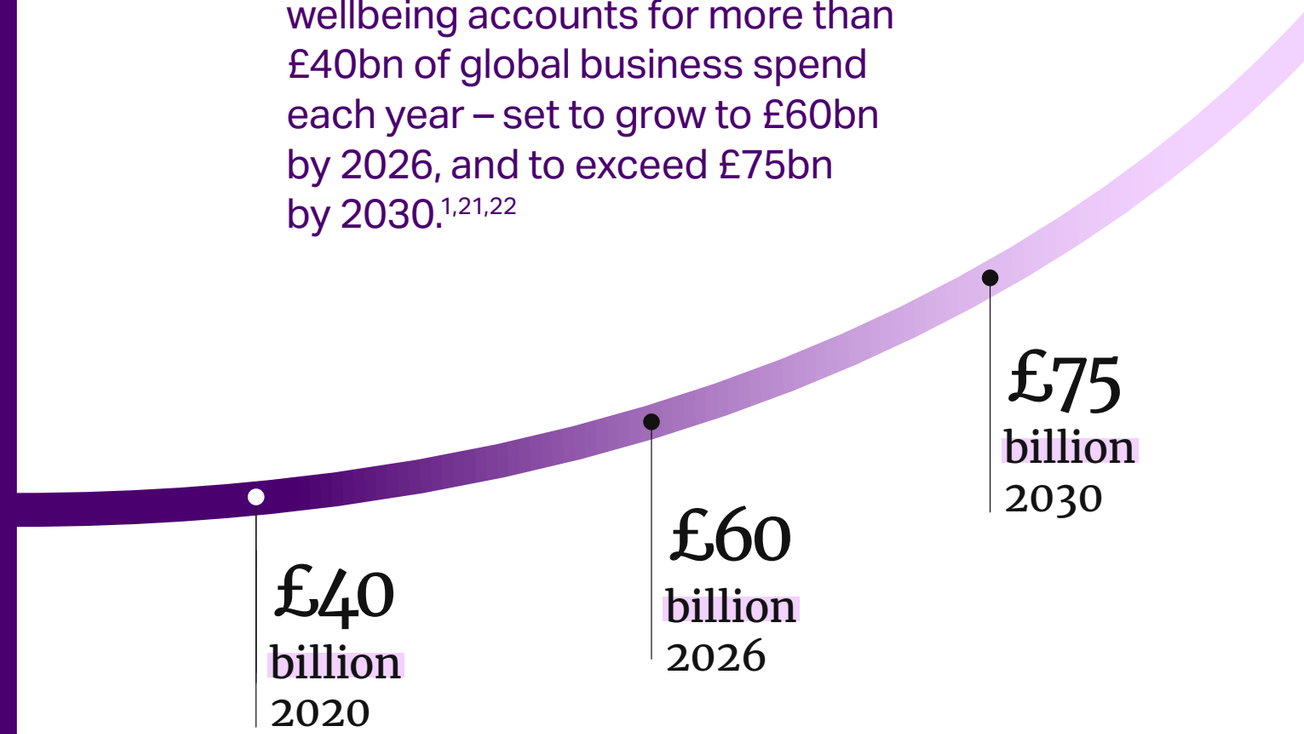
It can also transform employee productivity and performance – accounting for a 12% variance in task performance and a 34% variance in creative performance.[3]

So, whether we care about it because we care about our employees, or we care about the numbers (or hopefully both), the question leaders should be asking themselves is not so much 'Does it matter?' as 'What should we do about it?'

Employee wellbeing significantly predicts outcomes in key business metrics



Businesses recognise this growing need for action. Today, employee wellbeing accounts for more than £40bn of global business spend each year – set to grow to £60bn by 2026, and to exceed £75bn by 2030.[1,21,22]



of CEOs think they are doing enough for employee mental health[23]

of employees are struggling or suffering[24]

Working well or hardly working?

Yoga classes and meditation apps abound.

Companies promote massage Mondays, osteopathy Tuesdays, walk-and-talk Wednesdays, thoughtful Thursdays and pizza Fridays (not sure how healthy the latter are). And that's just in the mainstream.

The job titles of 'Chief Wellbeing Officer', 'Chief Happiness Officer', 'Chief Mindfulness Officer' and even 'Chief Gratitude Officer' are increasingly popular.

And yet as corporate spend on wellbeing grows, employee wellbeing continues to plummet.[1,21,22]

A growing number of studies suggest that most corporate wellbeing programmes have little-to-no impact on staff wellbeing.[24]

Study 1: No better

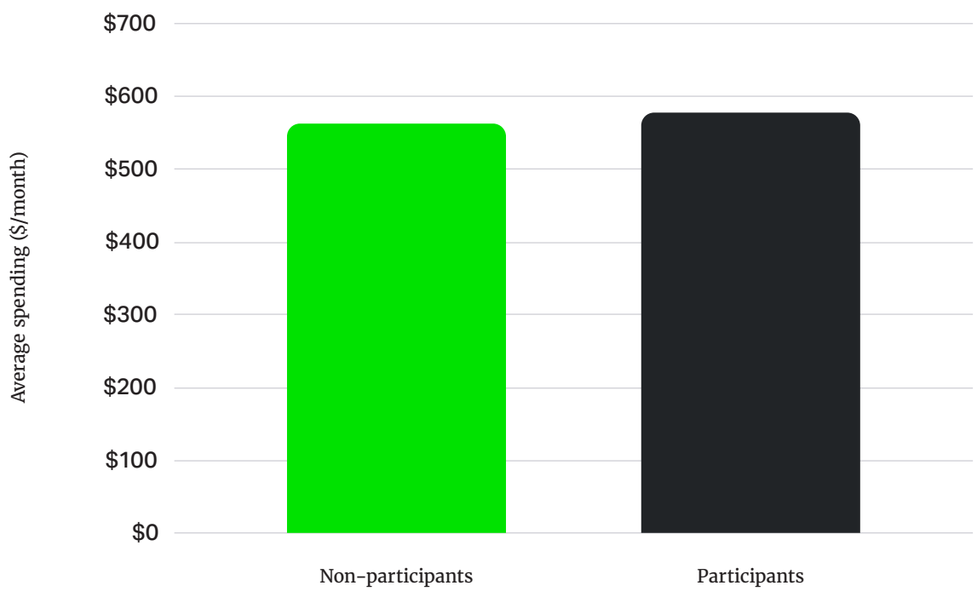
One large-scale study conducted at the University of Illinois in 2016–2018 set out to measure the impact of a workplace wellness programme on the health, productivity and medical expenditure of 4,834 employees, within a large organisation of more than 12,000 staff.[25]

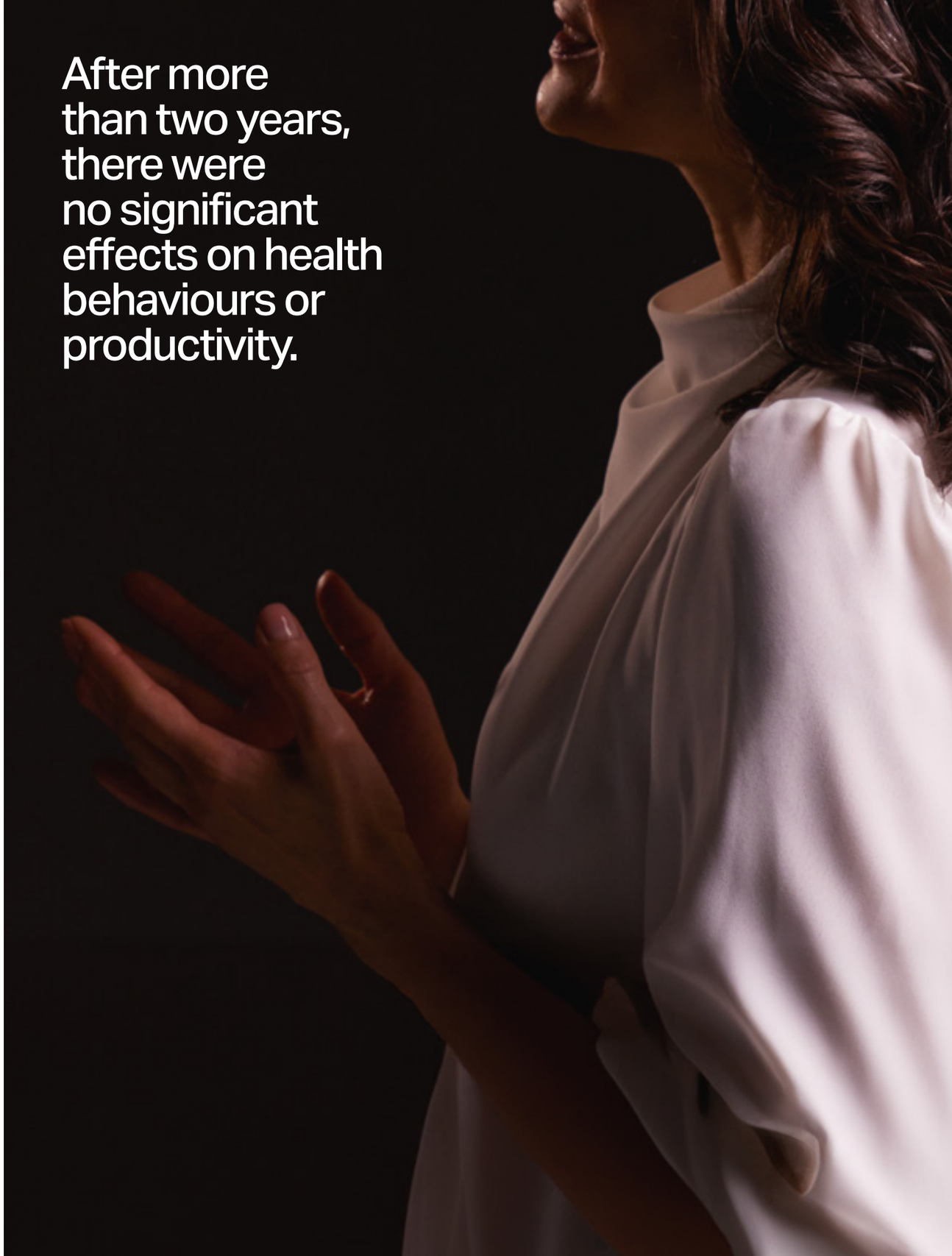
The programme, iThrive, which ran for two years, included an annual onsite biometric health screening, an annual online health risk assessment and weekly wellness activities, from tai chi and physical fitness to financial wellness and healthy workplace habits sessions.

In-person classes on chronic disease management and weight management were also offered, as well as a tobacco quitline and an online, self-paced wellness challenge.

The results? The programme caused no significant changes to participants' productivity, health behaviours, medical expenditures or self-reported health status. In fact, the group participating in the programme actually ended up spending a little more on medical support and interventions than the control group (although the amount was not statistically significant).

No difference in healthcare spending after wellbeing programme





After more than two years, there were no significant effects on health behaviours or productivity.

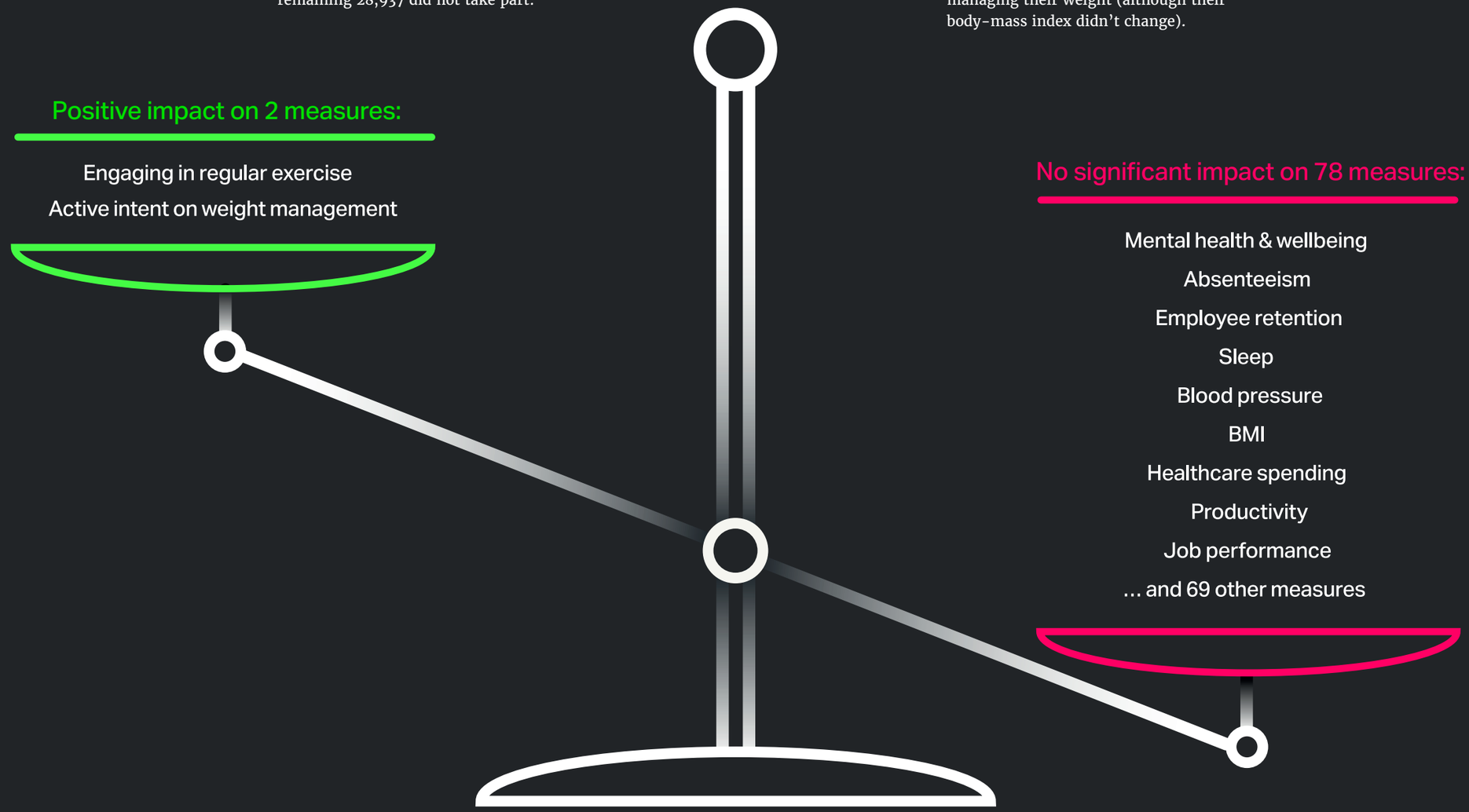
Study 2: No impact on 78 out of 80 measures

An even larger research programme, carried out across 160 worksites in 2019 for a large US warehouse retail company, also found next-to-no impact.[13]

The study, which involved nearly 33,000 employees, measured the effects of an 18-month workplace wellbeing programme made up of eight modules, which focused on nutrition, physical activity, stress reduction and everything else you'd expect from corporate wellbeing initiatives. 4,106 employees at 20 of the 160 worksites took part in the programme, while the remaining 28,937 did not take part.

The study examined more than 80 outcomes, from health behaviours to clinical markers of health, to health spending. After 18 months there was no impact on 78 of the 80 outcomes. Worksites that had participated had an 8.3% higher rate of employees engaging in regular exercise, and a 13.6% higher rate of employees who reported actively managing their weight (although their body-mass index didn't change).

But there were no significant differences in any of the other 78 outcomes measured, which included sleep, blood pressure and healthcare spending. Significantly, the programme had no impact at all on absenteeism, employee retention, productivity or job performance.

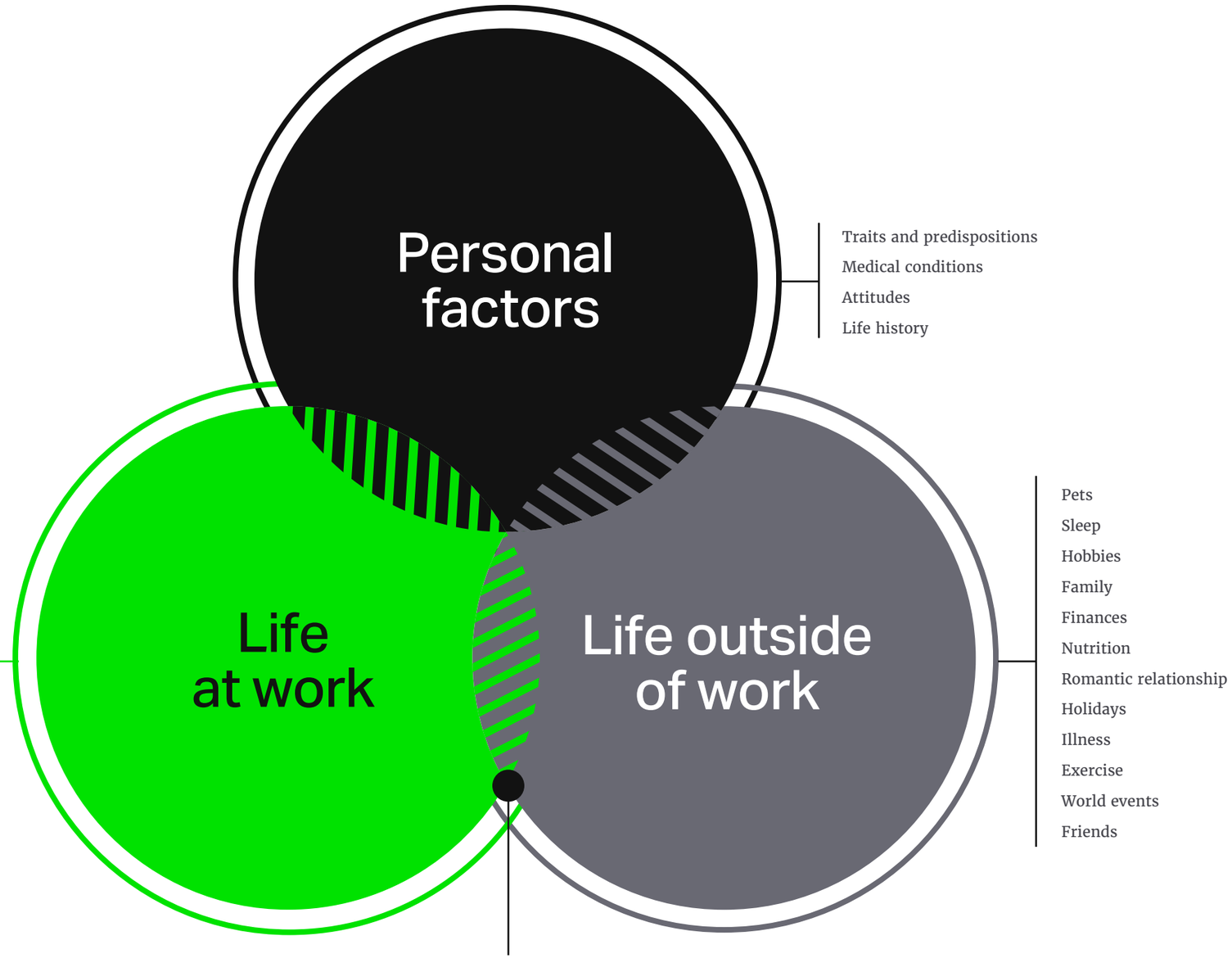


What determines our wellbeing

Most corporate wellbeing programmes focus at the periphery of work, yet research consistently shows that, when it comes to wellbeing, it's life at work that counts.

Manager effectiveness, leadership behaviour and the overall employee experience have an enormous impact on our wellbeing. In a recent study, 69% of employees said their manager has as much impact on their wellbeing as their spouse, and a greater impact than their doctor or therapist.[26]

Stress at work takes its toll on all areas of our lives, so investing in these areas and building a Wellworking culture improves employees' lives outside of work, as well as life at work.



Where corporate wellbeing should focus

Worthwhile work
Culture
Bosses
Colleagues
Resources
Physical workspace

Most corporate wellbeing is at the periphery

e.g. yoga classes, nutrition education

See Parent-Lamarche, A., & Marchand, A., 2019 (Reference 25)

As employers, the impact we can have on personal factors and life outside of work is minimal at best.

This may sound counter-intuitive. There is plenty of evidence to show that yoga, meditation and fitness challenges make a big difference to health and wellbeing. However well-intentioned these may be, evidence shows that when employers offer initiatives like these at work, it makes little difference.

Here's why.

Firstly, uptake for workplace wellbeing programmes is relatively low, with typically just 27% of employees signing up.[27]

More significantly, those who do sign up are those who need it least: they are already working shorter hours, exercising more frequently and earning higher salaries than their colleagues. Participants who already protect their wellbeing outside of work through activities such as yoga and meditation are 28% more likely to take part in workplace classes than the average employee.[28]

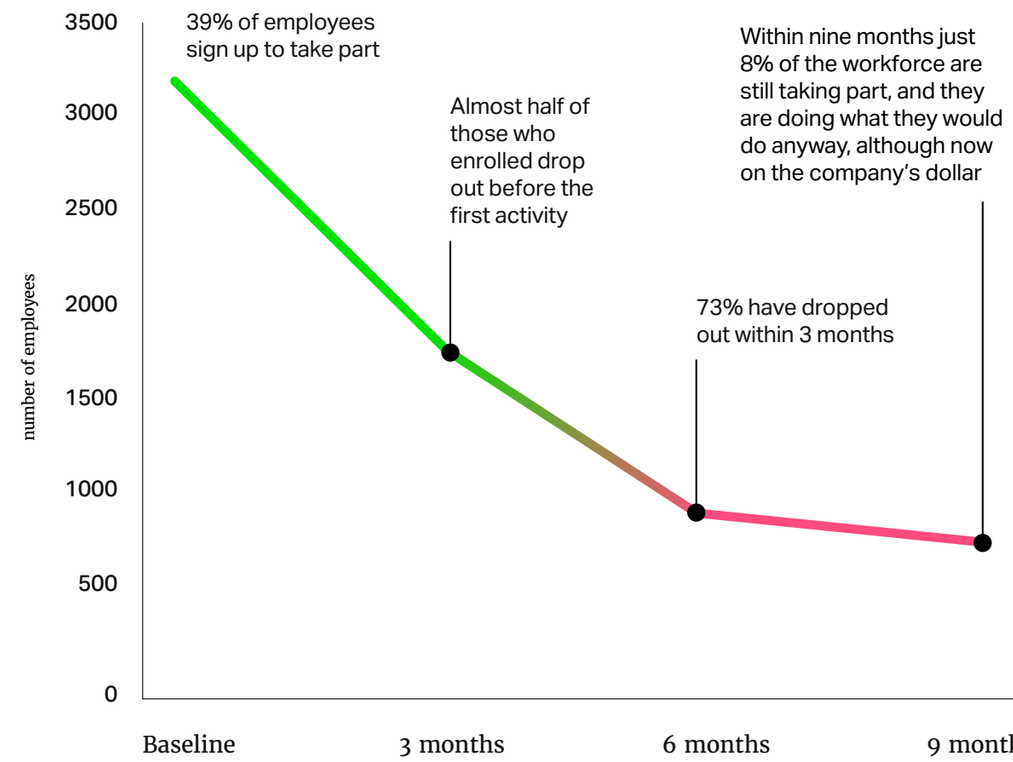
Secondly, dropout rates are achingly high. Take Study 3 shown on the right.[28] Before the first activity even begins, 50% of enrolled participants have dropped out. Within six months, 73% have withdrawn.

Within nine months, just 22% are still engaged. From an original participant base of 39% (which is exceptionally high), that's just 8% of the workforce still taking part.

Unsurprisingly, it's those most in need who opt out fastest. Drop-outs are highest among those working 50+ hour weeks and those in the lowest quartile for income.

Most wellbeing activities are appealing benefits that can help burnish an employer's reputation and may encourage a few employees to change their lifestyle for the better but, overall, they don't move the thermometer on employees' health and wellbeing.

Study 3: Drop-out rates from wellness programmes



Drop-out rates are highest among those working 50+ hour weeks and those in the lowest quartile for income.

The five drivers of wellbeing at work

Purpose

'I am passionate about the work I do'

▲ Engagement (.74)[35]
▼ Intention to leave (-.49)[35]

Belonging

'I have meaningful relationships at work'

▲ Employee satisfaction (.62)[33]
▼ Stress (-.41)[34]

Certainty

'I feel clear about the next weeks and months at work'

Engagement (.36)[29] ▲
Emotional exhaustion (-.35)[30] ▼

Competence

'My work makes me feel competent'

Effort (.30)[31] ▲
Burnout (-.25)[31] ▼

Autonomy

'I have a chance to change things for the better'

Commitment (.48)[32] ▲
Intention to leave (-.36)[32] ▼

Certainty
No surprises

Not knowing is not good for our health. Over the short term, uncertainty creates acute stress, increasing cortisol levels and affecting an employee's adaptability and ability to make decisions.[36] Sustained uncertainty – such as continuous reorganisations or ever-changing priorities – leads to chronic stress, increasing the risk of a host of physical ailments, from heart disease to high blood pressure, diabetes to obesity, a weakened immune system, gastrointestinal disorders, autoimmune diseases, insomnia, burnout, depression and anxiety disorders.[37,38,39]

So uncomfortable do we find uncertainty that, in a study that administered electric shocks, participants displayed greater psychological and physical symptoms of stress when faced with a 50/50 likelihood of a shock than when faced with the 100% certainty they would receive one – even though half the time they would be better off.[38]

The world is full of uncertainty: global warming, economic turbulence, pandemics, political crises, geopolitical wars and other factors that are hard to predict and can have a significant impact on our mental state. There isn't much employers can do about any of these.

Where bosses can play an important role is in the level of certainty they offer at work.

A manager whose mood changes from day to day, or moment to moment, is destabilising. Employees who feel uncertain of their role, or torn between two conflicting roles, are at a greater risk of depression and anxiety.[39] Certainty is why agile ways of working are a double-edged sword: when effectively implemented they increase focus and clarity, but when executed poorly they can lead to confusion about priorities and responsibilities, increasing the uncertainty they were designed to manage.[40,41,42,43]

Feeling unsure about our own future, whether it's concerning the risk that our budget will be cut, or our promotion denied, or how we'll be affected by a restructure or starting a new job, also takes its toll on our wellbeing, often raising our blood pressure and cholesterol.[36]

Even being left waiting for ages to know what someone senior thinks of our work is not great for our health. Again, managers can play an important role in reducing this uncertainty, even in decisions that are outside of their control. There is a world of difference between the boss who says 'Can I see you tomorrow?' and the one who says 'Can I see you tomorrow to understand more about the research behind your insightful report?'

Certainty

No matter the personal circumstances, reducing uncertainty improves wellbeing and productivity at work.[44,45,56]

Uncertainty does not affect everyone equally. An individual employee's tolerance for uncertainty can vary enormously depending on their life history, mental state in the moment and even the strength of their romantic relationship if they are in one.[48]

The leader who is emotionally regulated and provides early guidance so decisions aren't a surprise, and who behaves consistently with their values, sticks with plans, responds quickly with feedback and doesn't get swayed by the last person they spoke with, will therefore have a beneficial impact on their colleagues' wellbeing.[49] Such leaders should also focus people on more medium-term objectives, insulate them from the whims of volatile stakeholders and keep to time.

There is an abundance of ways that a considerate leader can increase certainty, and all of them are learnable.

The gains from increasing certainty build over time. As people feel more assured and less wary of avoidable shocks and sudden surprises, they not only feel better but are more able to cope with the unknowns that can't be controlled.[50] This mindset of confident uncertainty, where we recognise that we don't know what will happen but feel assured that we will be able to cope with whatever comes our way, sets us up to be comfortable with ambiguity, and even thrive in the face of uncertainty.

Leaders can also play a valuable role in normalising the natural anxiety that comes with uncertainty by role-modelling how to lean in to that fear and still flourish.[51]

Study 4: A healthier society

When we target our investment at the five drivers of wellbeing, the impact on society can be greater than we expect. A study that followed more than 370 working families for more than 10 years showed that children's developmental and social outcomes were directly and significantly affected by their parents' work lives.

Parents who enjoyed more autonomy and a greater sense of belonging at work were, in turn, warmer and more engaged when interacting with their infants.[52]

Ten years later, their children consistently performed better in reading and maths, showed better social skills and emotional regulation and had fewer behavioural problems at school than the children of parents who hadn't felt a strong sense of autonomy and belonging.[53]

For ESG-conscious companies that are keen to make a difference in the world for generations to come, investing in the five drivers of wellbeing is a sure bet.

Competence
Yes, I can

'Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right', quipped Henry Ford, unaware that he had created one of the most frequently quoted self-help axioms for the next hundred years.

While it doesn't bear scrutiny as a statement of fact (that I think I can scale tall buildings with a single leap suggests more about my mental state than my athletic ability) – from a psychological perspective there's something in it.

The scientific term for feeling confident we can do something is self-efficacy, which is strongly correlated with optimism, relationship health, performance and success, as outlined in MindGym's 'Precision Coaching: Better, faster, always, whatever your goal.'[54]

The opposite is also true. People who suffer from impostor syndrome, where they worry that it's only a matter of time before they get exposed as a fraud and everyone realises they are unable to do their job, are at higher risk of depression, anxiety and burnout, limiting their performance.[55]

So long as self-efficacy doesn't tip into self-delusion, it's good for our wellbeing. One universally applicable route to avoid crossing that boundary is to build competence, and the best way to build competence is through learning.

This does not mean sending people on more training courses or offering digital learning libraries. Often quite the opposite. What it does mean is developing an 'always learning' mindset, and creating an environment where people are encouraged to experiment and are recognised for developing new skills.[56]

Learning is a reliable route to competence, and is central to a sustainable wellbeing strategy, but it takes time. When an individual feels overwhelmed, telling them to acquire new skills is probably going to make things worse.

The immediate response to a perceived lack of competence may be a pep talk to renew an employee's confidence, reducing the demands to more manageable tasks, offering extra resources, providing political air cover or extending the timeline for what's being asked of them.

When people feel set up to fail, no one gains. Competence is key to wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

Learning is one of the more reliable sources of happiness,[57] but the benefits extend beyond happiness alone. 'Growth' is one of six psychological conditions for high performance, helping with engagement and retention.[58]

Study 5: Seeking advice boosts perceptions of competence

People often worry that asking for advice, help or support will make them seem less competent, but in fact, the reverse is true.

In a study involving 191 students at a US university, researchers matched participants with an online, anonymous partner in a computerised 'brain teaser' test, and measured how competent they perceived their partners to be.[59]

The students were seated in separate cubicles in front of computers with headphones. First, they were told it would be their turn to complete the brain teaser – then their anonymous partner (in another cubicle) would have a go. They were allowed to send two instant messages to their partner during the study. Unbeknown to them, the anonymous partner was actually a computer-simulated program.

At the beginning of the program, the computer sent the message: 'Hey, good luck'. Then, at the end, participants either received the message 'I hope it went well', or 'I hope it went well. Do you have any advice?'

When asked how confident they were in their partners' skills, participants who had been asked for advice rated their partners as more competent than those who hadn't. They were also more likely to say they would ask their partner for advice on a similar problem-solving task in future.

Asking for advice is not only a great way of gaining competence, it will help you seem more competent too.

Comp ten

Compete

Competence

Autonomy
My choice

In countless studies in different countries and at different times, there is, consistently, one group of workers who work longer hours, earn less and yet are happier with their work–life balance. The group that holds these apparently paradoxical attributes are not nurses or games designers (two of many popular guesses) but the self-employed.

The way psychologists have explained this paradox is that self-employed people represent a phenomenon that applies across all people in all circumstances: greater autonomy correlates with greater wellbeing.[60]

The benefits of feeling free to make decisions aren't restricted to contentment with work–life balance. Autonomy has far-reaching health benefits that can go as far as extending our lives.[61]

In a study carried out in a nursing home, one group of patients was given their own plant to care for and allowed to choose which movie night to attend from a list of options. Patients in the comparison group were given a plant but told that staff would care for it, and were assigned a schedule for movie nights.

Not only did patients in the first group, with the two small autonomy boosts, feel healthier and happier, as well as seeming observably happier to staff, but over the following 18 months, their mortality rate was half that of the comparison group.[62]

'Patients who cared for their plant had half the mortality rate of those whose plant was looked after by the staff.'

Autonomy even has a greater impact on wellbeing than money. Indeed, the most significant way that money helps our health is by giving us more opportunity for autonomy.[63]

In corporate life it can feel that autonomy is a false prophet. The rules, structures, processes and politics can leave people feeling like victims caught in the system, rather than the protagonists who are able to change it.

This doesn't make autonomy in big companies a hopeless case. Quite the opposite. Remember, the patients in the care home weren't put in charge of running it or even of writing the menus for lunch. They were simply made responsible for caring for a plant and allowed to choose, from prescribed options, which movie to watch.

From offering opportunities for job-crafting, to involving employees in decisions about how to streamline processes, we can give employees a very meaningful sense of autonomy.[64,65,66]

By the same token, creating the conditions for people to make suggestions increases their sense of psychological safety and ownership of their role – again, building their sense of autonomy at work.[67,68,69]

Autonomy is at least as subjective as it is objective. Two people in identical circumstances can have radically different perceptions of how much autonomy they have.[70,71]

Self-employed people aren't an island. In most cases they are dependent on their customers, landlord, bank, suppliers and a forgiving family. The crucial thing is that they feel in control of their destiny.

It is not possible to replicate the self-employed world in company life completely but, when it comes to feeling more autonomous, most organisations could get a lot closer.

Study 6: Chance encounters inspire innovation

One of our greatest sources of creative inspiration at work comes from casual encounters (the people we bump into over coffee or lunch) and not those we work with directly. These casual collisions can lead to some of our smartest innovations and brightest eureka moments – contributing greatly to both individual and organisational competency and creativity over time.

One 2020 study from Microsoft showed that innovation decreased significantly once work-from-home policies were in place.[72] Why? It wasn't because people had less contact with their own team members; it was because they had fewer casual collisions with a broad variety of people with different perspectives and skill sets. Their creativity and innovation suffered as a result.

Belonging
One of us

We've all experienced feeling left out. While we know it feels horrible, most of us are unaware of quite how much damage it does.

One landmark study set out to reveal the effects on our brains of feeling excluded. Participants put on a virtual-reality headset and then played a game of ball with two cartoon avatars – one of whom they believed to be a close friend or significant other, and the other a stranger. (In reality, both avatars were controlled by the researchers.) At a certain point in the game, the avatars began passing the ball between themselves, completely ignoring the participant's avatar.

Brain-imaging scans showed that the distressing feeling of being excluded from the game activated the same parts of the brain as those associated with physical pain. Being left out hurts just like twisting an ankle or being punched in the gut.[73]

Being excluded is bad, but isolation is even worse. When we spend long periods of time alone, our brains become more vigilant: we perceive demands as more threatening than they would usually be, our 'fight or flight' response kicks in faster and our dopamine levels drop. Isolation corrodes our energy and wellbeing, weakening our immune system and putting us at greater risk of anxiety, depression and cognitive decline.[74]

Spending a lot of time alone even increases our risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, dementia, Alzheimer's and death.[75,76,77]

On the other hand, spending time with people we like, and who like and respect us, has all sorts of health benefits, from boosting our immune system and perceptions of stress, to reducing our risk of anxiety, depression and physical illness.[75]

Study 7: Wise interventions combat inequality

As humans, we are exquisitely attuned to sense whether or not we belong in a group – far more so than other species.[81] And when this need is threatened, the resulting discomfort and self-doubt can have far-reaching effects – affecting our performance, self-efficacy, self-confidence[82] and even our coordination, balance and spatial awareness.[83]

Some psychologists think that threats to belonging drive problems as varied as racial achievement gaps[84] and political polarisation.[85]

Scientists have found that psychologically 'wise' interventions – interventions that reassure people of their belonging, even when they are subjected to wider messages of degradation – can help close achievement gaps and even raise ethnic-minority students' school achievements for as long as three extra years.[86,87,88]

Get back to the office: mandate or medicine?

The drive to bring employees back to the office is often portrayed as a battle between employer and employee - but the reality is somewhat different.

In fact, Gen Z employees may benefit most from the social, developmental and wellbeing benefits of coming back together in person, as well as the structure it gives to their day.

Isolation and loneliness are endemic among this group, who crave connection and to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Gen Z greatly value opportunities to connect with and learn from older colleagues, and the ties they build at work form organic support systems around them, strengthening and protecting their wellbeing.[89]

Sitting down and eating with colleagues is often the highlight of their day. Other in-office rituals, from the first-day welcome to daily stand-ups, weekly lunches, monthly feedback sessions and quarterly recognition announcements, make a huge difference to their sense of connection and are to be encouraged.[90]

The wider and more diverse our social network, the happier we are likely to be. Studies show that those with a more diverse set of relationship types, from colleagues to acquaintances, clients to close friends, a mentor, best friend and family have greater wellbeing than those who only interact with their children and partners, or just a few close colleagues and friends.[76]

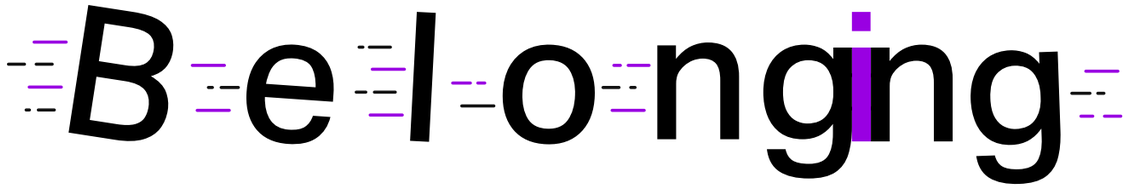
Our best chance of forming these diverse relationships is at work. At least it was, before COVID-19. Now, with many white-collar workers spending more time working from home, the risk of loneliness, declining relational diversity and a loss of belonging is even greater, all of which can lead to depression.[74]

Fortunately, there is plenty that business leaders can do to build back belonging.

Small-scale behaviours, repeated daily at an individual level, have much more impact than grand statements.[78] Highlighting what we have in common and celebrating collective successes helps. Making sure quieter introverts are brought into the conversation and creating and sticking with team rituals all help. Asking colleagues about their lives outside the office and discovering shared passions, from sports to pets to bake-offs, also adds joy to work.

Fun is something we could do with more of. Not forced fun or snide jokes, but gentle banter, self-deprecating humour and quick wit can all help lighten the mood.[79,80]

Belonging is strongly correlated with wellbeing, and work is one of the places we are most likely to achieve it.[34]



Purpose
My work matters

Core to the human condition is the need to feel that we matter. When we have a sense of purpose we feel happier, have more energy, build stronger relationships, engage in healthy habits (exercising regularly, eating well) and sleep better. Studies show that purpose even reduces our risk of heart disease, chronic illness and Alzheimer's and extends our lifespan.[91]

One of the most common negative effects of retiring is feeling that we no longer have a purpose or reason to get up in the morning and this is exacerbated by the change in routine.[92]

We can feed this desire to contribute by volunteering as a Samaritan, becoming a school governor or running the marathon for a local charity. All noble causes. But for those of us who work, our greatest chance to feel that what we do matters is centred on where we spend most of our waking hours.

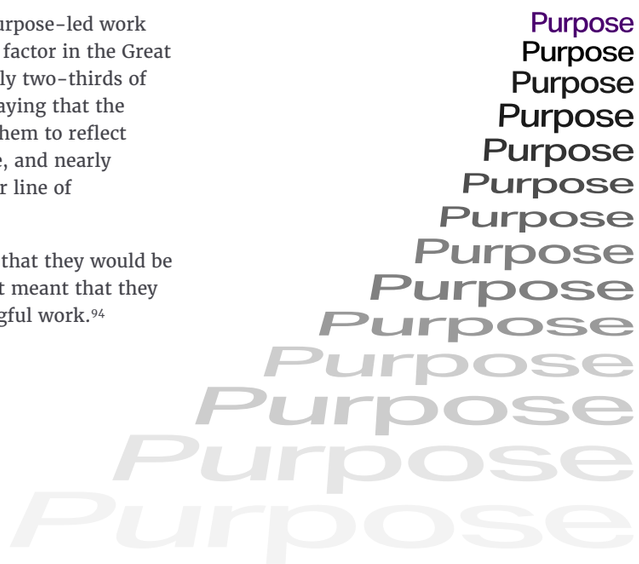
A yearning for more purpose-led work has been a key driving factor in the Great Resignation, with nearly two-thirds of US-based employees saying that the pandemic has caused them to reflect on their purpose in life, and nearly half reconsidering their line of work as a result.[93]

Nine in ten people say that they would be willing to earn less if it meant that they could do more meaningful work.[94]

It's not what you do that seems to determine how purposeful you consider your work. Doctors and hospital cleaners are just as likely to see their work as a calling (as opposed to just a career or a job). And those who do feel that their work is a calling apply more discretionary effort at work and are happier with the balance between work and home.[95,96,97,98]

Another great source of purpose is the sense of satisfaction we derive from achieving something difficult, especially if the goal is a self-set challenge.

Feeling that our work has an impact and is appreciated and valued by colleagues, also makes a huge difference. In a recent study, men who felt undervalued and underappreciated in high-pressure work environments had double the risk of heart disease as those who felt high in purpose and fulfilment.[99]



'Meaning' has many meanings

Our interpretations of meaning vary widely.[105]

Doing work that makes a difference to society might feel very important to us at one point in our lives. At another, we might derive our sense of meaning from providing a better future for our family, building our careers or developing skills to grow in a new direction.

The more opportunities our work offers to help us move towards a desired future self, the more meaningful the work will be.[106]

This is also the reason why one person might feel that a repetitive job lacks meaning: because it prevents them from growing or developing a variety of skills; whereas another might find it meaningful because it connects them with the organisation's purpose, or makes them feel that they are a valued member of the team.

Almost all companies now have an uplifting purpose that goes beyond delighting clients and meeting shareholders' needs.

'We chase the miracles of science to improve people's lives' (Sanofi); 'To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time' (Starbucks); 'Helping Britain prosper' (Lloyds Banking Group). While these big corporate missions do help, they tend to play only a small part.

Reframing selling insurance as helping people sleep better; auditing as building the trust on which the global economy depends and tax collecting as finding the money to pay for what makes our society great all help at the margin.

More impact comes from introducing employees to end users who have benefited from their work. One study measured the efforts and results of a group of fundraising callers soliciting donations from alumni for scholarship students.[100] Initially, the fundraisers had no interaction with the scholarship students who benefited from their work.

A group of callers then spent 10 minutes talking with a scholarship recipient, and learning how their efforts had made a difference to the student's life.

One month later, the callers who had met the scholarship students had more than doubled the amount of time they spent on the phone and the amount of donation money they secured. Efforts and results in the control group remained unchanged.

Most of the time, our sense that what we do matters is generated by the small things our colleagues say and do.[101] Knowing that even if our analysis didn't appear in the final report, it fuelled the thinking that did, or that the code we wrote has already been reused in three other missions – all of this adds up and makes a difference.

Managers can boost our sense of purpose even through small acts of reminding us that we're making progress.[102] Removing work that feels futile also helps,[103] as does offering work linked to causes we believe in.[104]

There are endless ways to build purpose into the flow of work. It doesn't take any more time and it doesn't require much more effort. We just need to know how and be bothered to try.

The picture of health

'One size fits all' may work for woolly hats but it isn't the answer for healthy heads.

Two people who appear to have the same overall level of wellbeing may do so for very different reasons.

One may have too much work on, or feel that their work is pointless, while the other feels that their work is extremely worthwhile but finds that colleagues are being obstructive behind their back or their boss is aggressive.

MindGym's team of psychologists have analysed hundreds of papers and consulted with many of the world's most highly regarded wellness experts to develop a clear taxonomy for wellness. This forms the basis for a new wellbeing diagnostic, enabling company leaders to pinpoint the wellbeing issues that need addressing and target the right solutions to the right people at the right time.

Just because I don't have a broken leg doesn't mean that I'm fit enough to run a marathon.

Illbeing is not the opposite of wellbeing

It is common to think of wellbeing as a continuum that runs from very negative to very positive, through stages such as 'In crisis', 'Struggling', 'Coping' and 'Flourishing'. This assumes that illbeing is the opposite of wellbeing: i.e. as an employee's wellbeing increases, their illbeing decreases, or vice versa.

The science suggests otherwise.

The World Health Organisation Constitution states that health and wellbeing are not only the absence of 'disease or infirmity' but also 'the presence of complete physical, mental and social well-being'.[107]

Just because I don't have a broken leg (lack of illbeing) doesn't mean that I'm fit enough to run a marathon (wellbeing) – although of course it is possible to be well and flourishing in spite of physical impairments.[108]

Similarly, wellbeing and illbeing are interrelated, and one contributes to the other – but the absence of one does not mean the presence of the other.

Being positively engaged at work (wellbeing) requires more than simply not being burnt out (lack of illbeing).

True wellbeing, which is fundamental to our ability to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life, includes active mental states such as being in flow, contentment, engagement and vitality.[109,110]

The removal of negatives (illbeing) is helpful, but it's not sufficient to move an employee to a positive state of wellbeing or 'flourishing'.

It is more helpful to consider ill/wellbeing as two related, yet different, dimensions.

Positive wellbeing can exist alongside aspects of illbeing.[111] I can be engaged and worried, satisfied and exhausted, absorbed and stressed.

well
illbeing

The six states of wellbeing

The first step to understanding causes rather than symptoms is to map where employees are today.

MindGym's new wellworking diagnostic identifies the six most common profiles for wellbeing and provides benchmark data for each of these.

You can conduct the diagnostic in your company to find out where people sit now – by division, region, team or whatever is most relevant to you.

The six profiles (with benchmark age of population in brackets) are:

'In crisis' – very high in illbeing and very low in wellbeing (4%)*

For someone who is in crisis, their situation at work has become too much for them. Their physical and mental health is severely threatened.

At this stage, the support that the organisation alone can offer is limited. Where they can help is through safeguarding and signposting to appropriate resources, which may include employee assistance programmes. Ultimately, employees in crisis are likely to need direct clinical support.

'Struggling' – high in illbeing and low in wellbeing (12%)

Work is taking more than it gives for people in the 'struggling' group: they are suffering with stress and exhaustion that can lead to serious consequences for them and/or the organisation.

They are visibly showing signs of stress and are unlikely to be doing their best work.

'Fragile thriving' – high in illbeing and high in wellbeing (15%)

Fragile thrivers look like they are doing their job very well and may well be considered high-flyers.

But underneath, they feel they don't have the resources to meet the demands placed on them and may be on the cusp of falling apart. It's likely they feel low in certainty, competence and often autonomy, although they may be high in purpose and belonging. When it goes wrong for fragile thrivers, it can be sudden and tends to take their colleagues by surprise.

'Boring out' – low-to-medium in illbeing and low in wellbeing (16%)

Those who are boring out seem to be doing their job well enough to get by, but they are psychosocially disconnected. They aren't engaged in their work, and they represent flight risks or becoming 'quiet quitters' especially if they feel they aren't being given opportunities to achieve their potential.

For some in this group, being stuck will feel worse and worse over time, so they may be at risk of slipping into illbeing and falling into the 'struggling' category.

'Coping' – medium in illbeing and medium in wellbeing (26%)

The coper looks like they are doing fine and they probably are. Steady, reliable and at no clear risk of burnout, but not flourishing. There is potential for them to feel better and more engaged, but also the risk that they will slip into more negative states if circumstances change.

'Flourishing' – low in illbeing and high in wellbeing (27%)

The flourisher is doing well and feeling great: they are happy, fulfilled, engaged and productive at work, and it's very likely that contentment is having a positive impact on their life outside of work. Flourishers often score highly across a number of drivers: most often purpose and belonging, and it's likely they also feel highly satisfied with their sense of competence, autonomy and/or certainty.

*Indicative of percentages in the overall population of workers

A picture of health

Business impact

These states are significantly linked to business outcomes such as intent to stay or leave. Where your employees sit on the wellbeing map directly influences their motivation, productivity and performance.[112]

Unsurprisingly, those who are **flourishing** at work (high in wellbeing and low in illbeing) are very engaged. They care about delivering high-quality work, are committed to their organisation and score highly on all the behaviours that drive business success.[113,114]

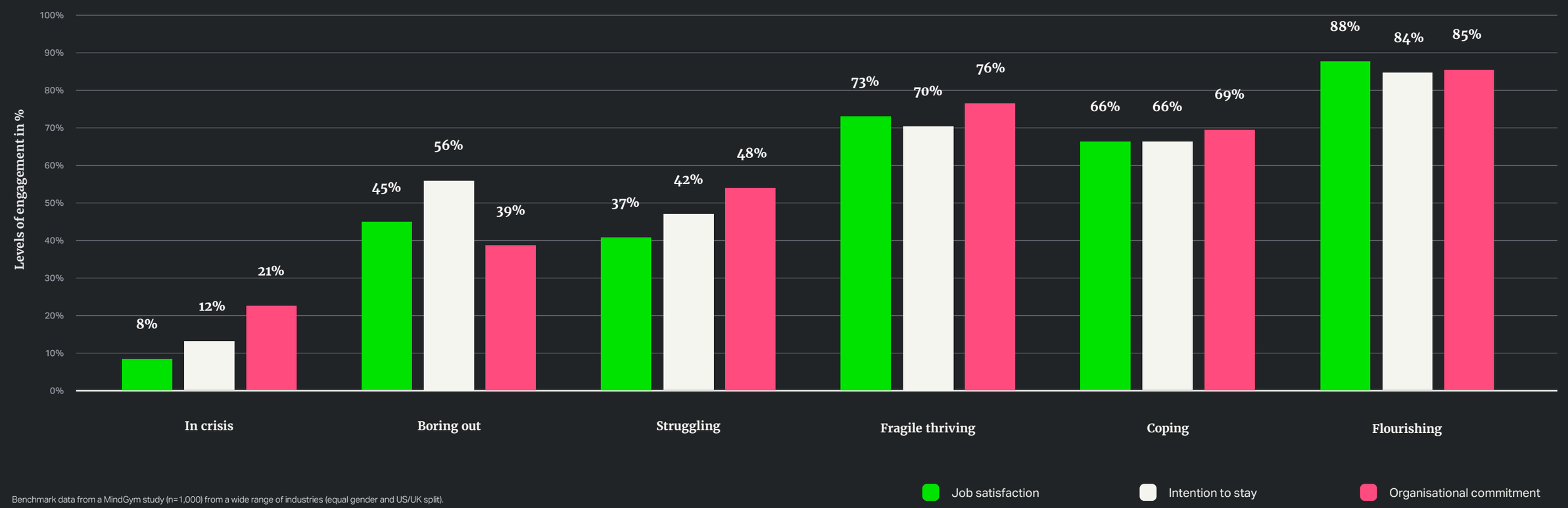
Interestingly, **fragile thrivers** (those who are happy and energised about some parts of their work but also stressed and exhausted) are hard to spot.

They are often just as motivated and committed to their employer as **flourishers**, so they won't be complaining about the company or their job. They might be high performers who seem very engaged and high in purpose. And yet they are low in certainty, and seem to score significantly lower on intention to stay and job satisfaction, so they could easily be poached – or they might even already be job hunting in the hope that it will offer relief from their current situation.[111,115]

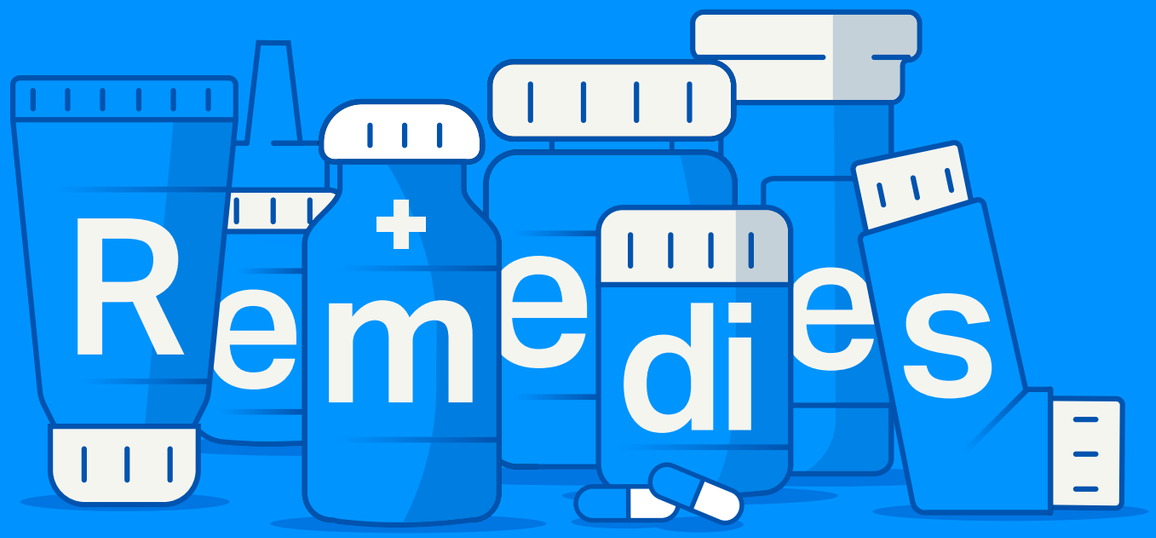
Often also called 'quiet quitting', boring out might sound harmless, but it's risky. Employees in this category are nowhere near as happy about having a relaxed time at work as you might think. They are less motivated and engaged than fragile thrivers and may engage in quiet quitting or even represent a flight risk.[115]

People who are struggling are low in motivation and job satisfaction, but especially low in commitment to the company: they will be out of the door as soon as they find a way out.[116,117]

Relationship between profiles and job attitudes



Benchmark data from a MindGym study (n=1,000) from a wide range of industries (equal gender and US/UK split).



There are three core remedies, each targeting a different need. They offer a launchpad for providing tailored solutions at scale, quickly and easily.

Recover

- Reduce illbeing

Reinforce

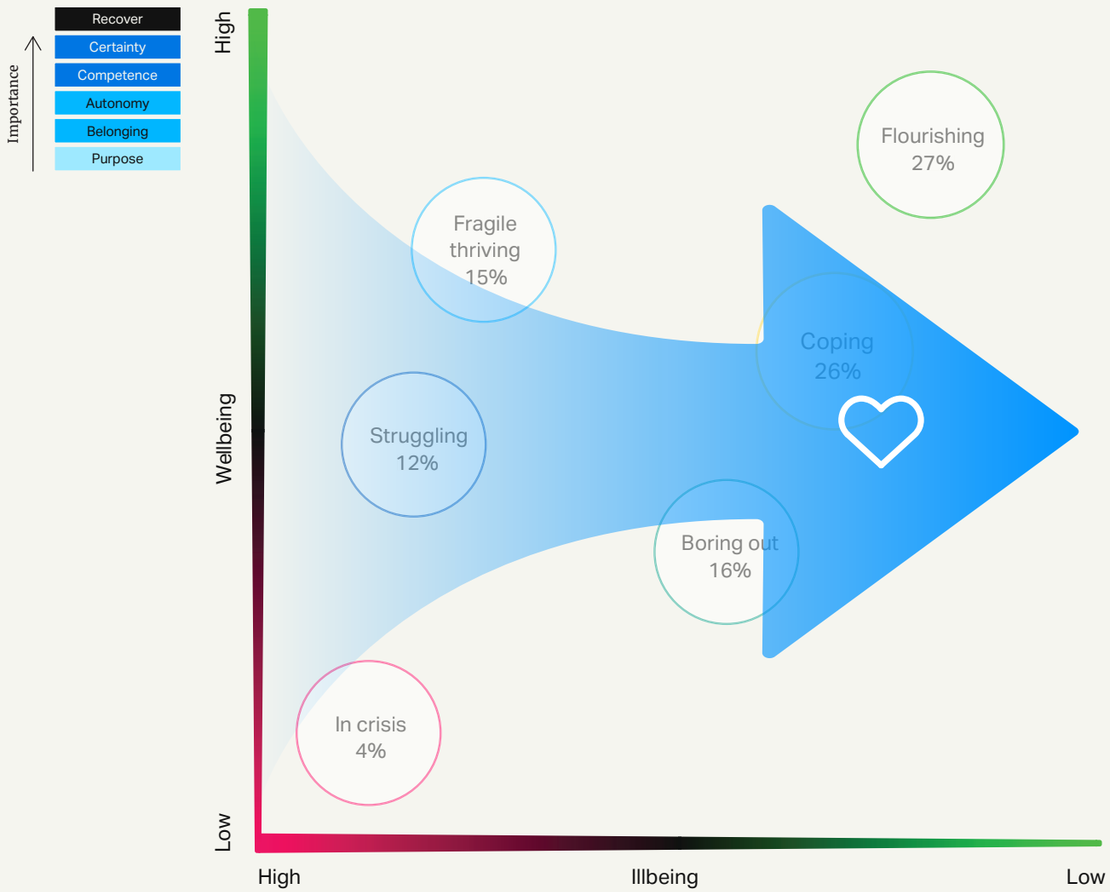
- Protect to avoid a fall in wellbeing

Reignite

- Increase wellbeing

Recover

To reduce illbeing



'I feel like I'm standing in a snowstorm, and each snowflake is another item on my to-do list', was a vivid description given by someone who was being coached by MindGym.

How to spot signs of illbeing in a hybrid work environment:

Colleagues might join meetings with their cameras off, avoid speaking in meetings or miss meetings altogether.

They might look dishevelled, gaunt or tired or appear on edge. Attempts to stay 'under the radar', avoiding seeking feedback and disengagement from team activities and social events are also warning signs.

Check in with them to see how they are doing, offer support and training and find ways to reinvolve them with their team, creating regular opportunities for connection.

Even if we don't use quite such colourful language, most of us can recall times when the demands placed on us greatly exceeded our ability to deliver on them.

When we feel overextended and unable to cope, we are likely to experience acute stress. When this occurs, cortisol and adrenaline (hormones released during stress states) move us to action to meet the challenge we encounter (referred to as 'fight or flight' states).[118]

However, after prolonged periods of feeling overstretched, acute stress can become chronic stress: we become depleted in our capacity to cope, ultimately risking what is commonly referred to as burnout.[119,120,121] Certainty tends to be the driver most strongly linked with reducing illbeing, and should therefore be the primary active driver in a 'recover' strategy, although the driver that is most needed can vary across different organisations and individuals.

The other state most often associated with illbeing is low competence. The individual needs to be reminded of their capability to meet the challenges facing them, or a task that boosts their confidence and sense of competence.

When this is the case, the priority is to get back to feeling in control. Effective strategies for managers include:

- Reduce the workload, at least for now, to give the employee a chance to recover.[122] A common tool for this is the four Ds: delete, defer, diminish or delegate.[123] Focus on a few manageable tasks and celebrate each success, however minor it may seem to you. If the few are still too many then encourage a break from work to take a holiday.[124,125,126,127]
- Increase resources. This can mean allocating people to help, or could involve reducing the friction in the rest of the system (e.g. personally engaging other stakeholders in their project) or coaching to help the employee.[122]
- Look at the challenge differently. Help the employee minimise the consequences of not delivering everything, or help them focus on what they can affect, rather than what is outside of their control.[128] Alternatively, remind them of how they managed in more demanding situations in the past. All of this can be part of a strategy to rebuild their self-confidence.[129]
- Reduce uncertainty. Explain the reason for meeting when requesting a meeting with an employee, or respond quickly to emails that took a level of courage to send.[130]

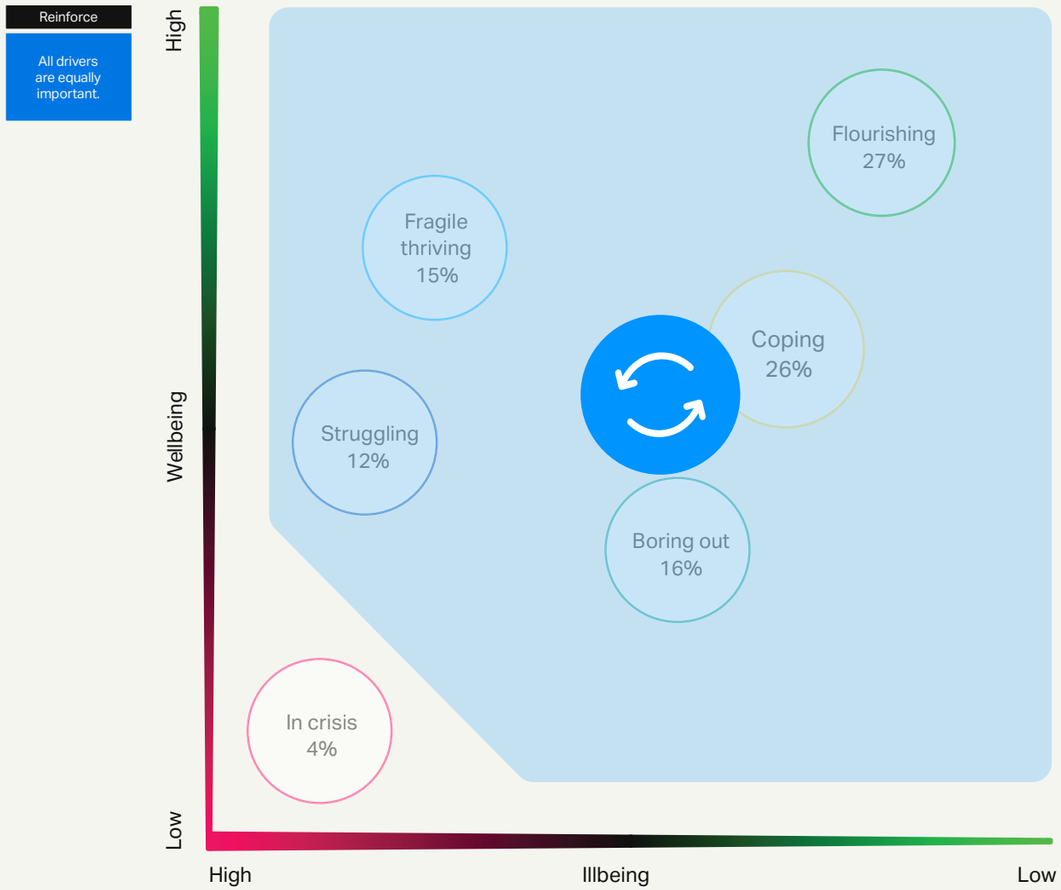
Leaders can also play an active role in reducing illbeing; for example, by sticking to plans, or communicating well in advance when they are likely to change.[131,132,133] Promoting and celebrating people who do great work every day, rather than just the heroes who swoop in to save the day in a crisis, also makes a difference.[102]

And, of course, the individual is far from passive in all this. We can reprioritise, ask for help, focus on what we can get done or reflect on how we coped the last time we felt like this.[122,128,129]

It may be that in your organisation/team it is not lack of certainty or competence that is the prime driver of high illbeing, in which case your 'recover' remedy will need to be altered. The Wellworking diagnostic will reveal the root causes and, armed with this knowledge, you can customise your approach to suit your situation. Whatever the causes, there are plenty of practical steps in the flow of work that leaders, managers and individuals themselves can take to reduce illbeing.

Reinforce

For everyone, whatever the weather



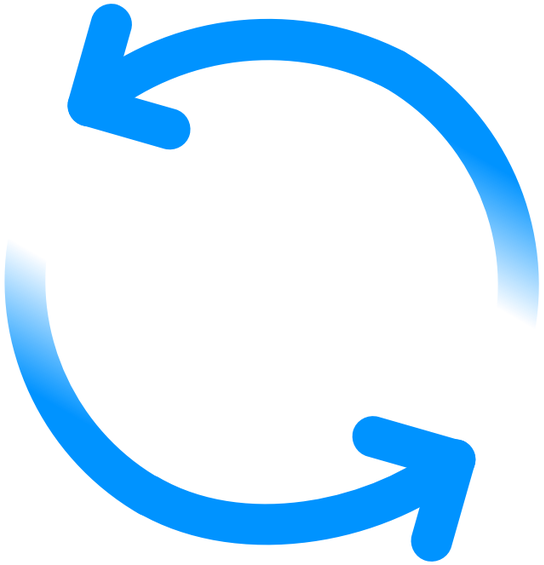
'Recover' and 'reignite' remedies are both designed to make things better: respectively, they reduce illbeing and increase wellbeing.

'Reinforce' is different. Rather than trying to make things better, it's designed to stop things getting worse.

It aims to build the understanding and behaviours that will nurture and strengthen wellbeing, as well as providing teams and managers with the tools to explore which of the five drivers requires most attention.

Above all, 'reinforce' is about spotting early on when there's a risk of slipping, and taking pre-emptive steps: proactively laying the foundations for calm and equanimity with everyday good habits and ways of working.

Setting psychological tripwires and alarm calls is a practical way to spot the risks early on. As individuals, we may notice our nervous ticks, such as talking too quickly or stress eating, and as managers we can spot when normally chatty people are quiet or their turnout for team meetings drops. Spotting our early warning signals helps us take pre-emptive steps while we are still in a good enough state to do so.



Healthy workplace habits are the equivalent of preventative medicine. They can include, for example:

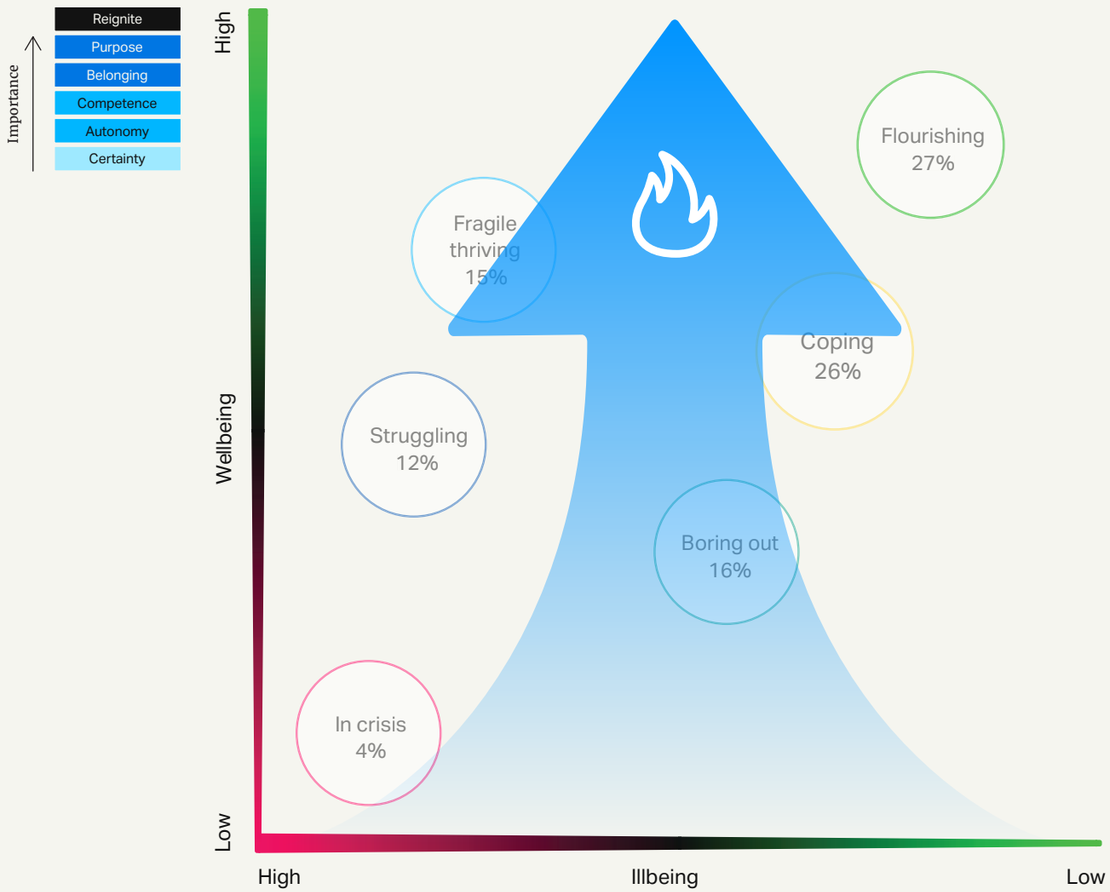
- Setting boundaries and creating psychological safety, so people are willing to speak out when they feel their boundaries are being crossed.[67,134]
- Creating routines and sticking to them, such as weekly 1:1s or sending pre-reads out at least 24 hours in advance.[135]
- Being punctual and respectful of other people's time.[136]
- Having breaks and finding ways to recover between intensive bursts; rotating workloads so everyone gets their share of respite.[124]
- As leaders, becoming more attuned to how our thoughts, feelings and reactions can impact on the wellbeing of our employees and addressing how we show up in the moment.[131]

Team norms and pacts also play a fundamental role in creating an environment where everyone feels supported to be or stay well at work. There is a growing body of research to show that the microclimate of how teams work and engage with each other, the pacts they stick to and the group identity they create is fundamental to their wellbeing.[137] Group-level interventions are one of the best-evidenced formats for supporting, strengthening and protecting team wellbeing.[138,139]

'Reinforce' is for everyone who scores at least medium on either wellbeing or illbeing. However, it is not an appropriate first solution for those who are struggling or in crisis.

Reignite

To move people towards wellbeing



There are three universal human desires which, when we feel they are being met, are likely to improve our wellbeing: feeling that what we do matters, feeling noticed and feeling that we're making progress.[102]

Work can help with all of these. And when it does, it creates a virtuous cycle where we feel more energetic and more positive which, in turn, gets us noticed (in a good way) and means we make more progress on the things that matter, and so on.[140]

Purpose and belonging are the drivers most strongly linked with increasing wellbeing and building towards flourishing, and therefore tend to be the principal drivers needed for a 'reignite' strategy.

There are plenty of practical ways managers can help move their team members from languishing (boring out or coping) to flourishing by dialling up purpose and belonging: from sharing stories about how customers/users have benefited from their work, to encouraging healthy dissent, ensuring everyone's voice is heard, having a laugh and reminding us all why we signed up to this in the first place.[141]

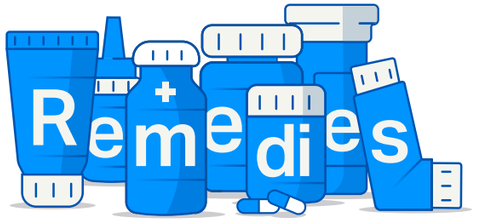
Taking action to create more 'teaminess' can contribute too, especially if it means colleagues get to know and appreciate each other more.[142,143] All of these are active steps that will help promote wellbeing, though some have a short shelf life and it's incumbent on the manager to keep these activities going.

To set people up to flourish more sustainably, it helps to change how they think – for example by encouraging:

- **Curiosity,** which opens our minds and keeps us learning (coincidentally one of the surest routes to happiness).[144,145,146]
- **Longer-term thinking:** in particular thinking about what I want to be different about my life in a given number of months or years, and how I can use this opportunity to realise my ambitions.[147]
- **Relishing challenges** that play to my strengths – especially when I can't immediately see how to accomplish them.[148]
- **Valuing intrinsic motivations:** (e.g. doing good work) over extrinsic ones (e.g. reward and promotion).[149,150,151]

Typically, the primary causes of low wellbeing are low 'belonging' and low 'purpose'. Yet, this can vary; for example, where capability is a major factor in low wellbeing, the remedy will need to be adjusted.

Three ready-made remedies



Brilliant Basics journeys

Leaders are important role models

Better at work · Well led · Energise

Recover
to reduce illbeing

- Certainty
- Competence
- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Purpose

Importance

Manager: Bounce back · Are you OK? · Sorted for stress · Staying power

Individual contributor: Under pressure · Alone not lonely · Bounce back · Staying power

Reinforce
to protect

All drivers are equally important.

Manager: Better at work · Dynamic delegation · Play to strength · Held to account

Individual contributor: Flourish · Create your own luck · Extra time · Managing expectations

Reignite
to increase wellbeing

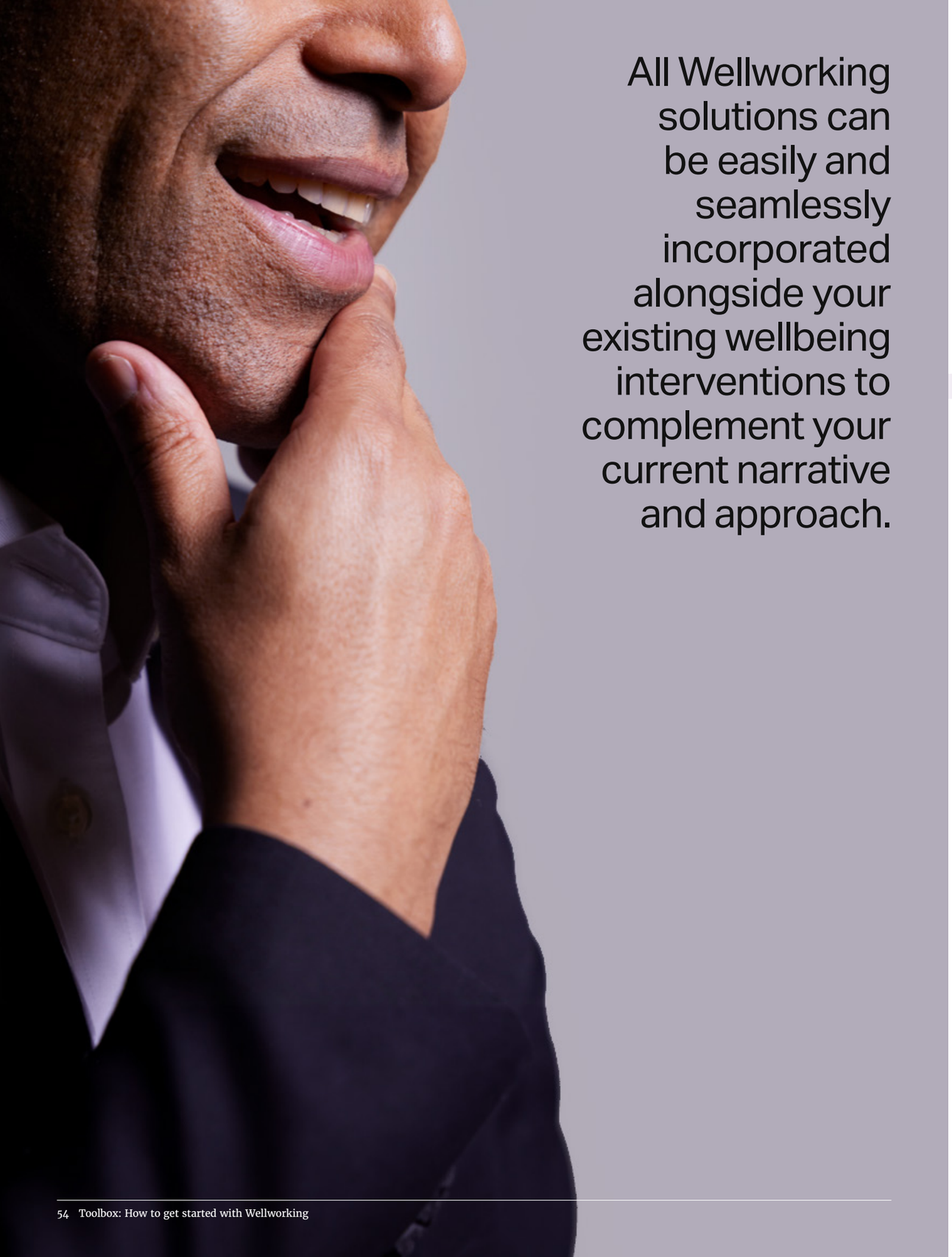
- Purpose
- Belonging
- Competence
- Autonomy
- Certainty

Importance

Manager: Energy source · Fearless teams · Shaping futures · Make it matter

Individual contributor: Unlock your learning · Pathfinder · Maxing meaning · Goal getting

Name	Go Large	Workout	Workout pro	eWorkout
Format	Virtual/In person	Virtual/In person	Virtual/In person	Virtual
Duration	60 mins	90 mins	120 mins	9 mins
Audience	Up to 100	16–20	16–20	–



All Wellworking solutions can be easily and seamlessly incorporated alongside your existing wellbeing interventions to complement your current narrative and approach.

How to get started

Wellworking diagnostic

Discover the root causes of illbeing at individual, team and organisational level with our proprietary diagnostic tools.

The 'picture of health' diagnosis

Understand the Wellbeing map of your workplace and conduct further qualitative research for a deeper dive.

Remedy recommendations

Analyse the results and design the solution together with MindGym's experts – all tailored to your goals for maximum impact.

Personalised Wellworking programme

Embed new, healthier habits using our comprehensive toolbox of live experiences (virtual and in-person), digital eWorkouts and 1:1 Precision Coaching.

The way to Wellworking

Run on MindGym's proprietary platform, our diagnostic tool reveals the root causes of low wellbeing in your workplace and what action to take.

Wellbeing is such a broad, amorphous term with so many definitions that, even as individuals, understanding and identifying how we really feel and what's affecting our wellbeing can be remarkably difficult.

On an organisational scale, getting a clearer understanding of our wellbeing state is even more challenging, with countless layers of complexity and opacity.

As a result, many companies give up on addressing root causes and invest almost entirely in areas of universal benefit, or on the small percentage of employees who are in crisis.

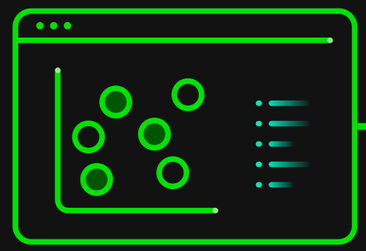
MindGym's Wellworking diagnostic is a psychologically validated tool which helps you unpick how your people are really feeling and what's causing them to feel that way. It then prescribes targeted Wellworking solutions, enabling you to meet your people where they are right now with solutions that get to the root of the problem.

Offering clear data to align stakeholders, track progress and see what's working, it's a great starting point for reframing the conversation about wellbeing in your company, and making faster progress towards a more impactful, long-term solution.

MindGym's diagnostics have been rigorously tested for reliability and validity, with data from research panels and pilot data in the context of real-organisational wellbeing problems. See appendix for more details.

Diagnostic dashboard

One size fits no one. Diagnostics offer deep insights into your wellbeing culture, with targeted actions to drive results.



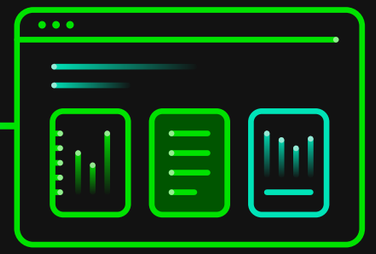
Wellworking deep dive

A map of where your people sit in terms of the six profiles.

Underlying causes and recommendations for action

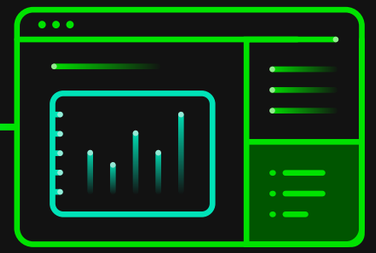
The root causes in your culture that influence wellbeing and how they affect the 5 drivers.

Hyper-targeted solutions, delivered one to one and one to many and tailored to your needs.



Executive summary

Explore insights and receive recommendations to take faster, more targeted action.



Differences

How your people score against the five drivers of wellbeing, with benchmarks.

Overall company score and team score based on the 5 drivers.

Which drivers need particular attention in your business.

Core Wellworking solutions

MindGym solution types

Product type	Description	Audience size	Length	Impact
Go Large	Like an interactive TED Talk, designed to change how people think about wellbeing.	20–1,000	45 to 60 mins	Mindset shift.
Workout Pro	An immersive session that delves deep into a wellbeing-related topic – transforming behaviour, attitudes and confidence.	Up to 20 in person Up to 16 virtually	3 hrs	Targeted behaviour change, empowering participants to apply learnings to their own challenges.
Workout	Highly participative, fast-paced wellbeing workshop brimming with practical tools to apply immediately. Proven to deliver the same impact as a conventional 1-day course.	Up to 20 in person Up to 16 virtually	90 mins	Targeted behaviour change, engaging participants in their learning through a blend of learning and group exercises.
Activation Pack	A written pack (PDF or printed) brimming with wellbeing exercises, tools and discussion prompts to guide you as you build your skills and apply knowledge in a real-life context.	No maximum	For use throughout your Wellworking journey	Enduring resource to embed and revisit learnings.

Recover

Product type	Name	Audience	Description
Go Large	Better at work	Managers & leaders	It doesn't have to be work or wellbeing. Find out how the science of wellbeing helps you to achieve both.
Go Large	Under pressure	Everyone	When we're under a rock of pressure we need a helping hand to get back to coping. Let's make a plan to rest, recover and respond.
Go Large	Bounce back	Everyone	Build your resilience and develop strategies to deal with adversity. Learn how to bounce back from setbacks and emerge even stronger on the other side.
Workout Pro	Well led	Leaders	Shape your leadership approach around the science of wellbeing to create a healthy, high-performing organisation where people want to stay and thrive.
Workout	Are you OK?	Managers	Discover how to spot when team members are struggling, when to reach out to ask 'How are you?' and how to respond, whatever their answer.

Reinforce

Product type	Name	Audience	Description
Go Large	Flourish	Everyone	Discover how we can each take action to bring the five drivers of wellbeing to life by changing the way we work. Explore how small, simple changes can make an enormous impact on our ability to stay well and flourish.
Go Large	Staying power	Everyone	Sustainable perseverance is key to high performance and preserving wellbeing. Master the art of flying in the face of adversity.
Workout Pro	Well led	Leaders	Shape your leadership approach around the science of wellbeing to create a healthy, high-performing organisation where people want to stay and thrive.
Virtual Workout Pro / Activation Pack	Energy source	Everyone	To create a source of positive energy by establishing healthy working practices with your team.
Workout	Goal setting	Managers	Learn to co-create meaningful goals with your direct reports that will stretch and motivate them – empowering them to perform at their best.
Workout	Goal getting	Everyone	Explore how to set meaningful goals which will suit you, stretch you and build towards flourishing.

Reignite

Product type	Name	Audience	Description
Go Large	Unlock your learning	Everyone	Activate a continuous learning mindset through tapping into your natural curiosity, enhancing your resourcefulness and bolstering your persistence.
Workout Pro	Energise	Managers	Become a crackling conductor of energy within your team – transforming their engagement, and invigorating and inspiring them.
Workout	Inspire	Leaders	Learn how to inspire and energise your teams in the way you communicate. Explore the science behind inspiration, and develop day-to-day tactics to galvanise your workforce.
Workout	Make it matter	Managers	Discover how motivation works, explore the various forms of motivation and learn how to connect team members with personally meaningful tasks.
Workout	Peak performance	Managers	Find out how to guide your steady performers from 'good' to 'great' and unlock peak performance across the team as a whole.
Workout	Maxing meaning	Everyone	Discover a sense of purpose in your day-to-day. Learn how to get the most out of your work by connecting to what matters to you – unlocking fulfilment and peak performance.
Workout	Pathfinder	Everyone	Start shaping your role and carving out your own career path based on your skills and interests. Learn how to get more of what you want from your working life by taking control and opening up options.

Digital: eWorkouts

Scalable and self-directed, our eWorkouts can be accessed from any device by any employee. Users answer a wellbeing questionnaire to test how they are scoring on the 5 drivers of wellbeing, and MindGym's navigator signposts them to the eWorkouts that will have most impact.

For everyone

Driver	Name	Description
	Bounce back	Understand how to respond to adversity, bounce back from setbacks and build your resilience.
	Staying power	Persevere during challenging and changing times by overcoming setbacks and gaining support from others.
	Change agility	Change brings opportunity, but it's still daunting. Learn how to face it and emerge stronger.
	Stress busters	Discover and practise the most successful strategies for dealing with short-term stress.
	Goal setting	Find goals that suit your situation and stretch you – helping you get the best from yourself.
	Create your own luck	Get what you want from your work by thinking optimistically, spotting opportunities and taking responsibility.
	Out of autopilot	Hack the autopilot in your brain to break old habits and build better ones, helping you to achieve your goals.
	Give me strength	Build self-awareness and uncover your strengths so that you can make the most of them every day.
	Flourish	Learn everyday tips, habits and strategies to help you establish a personal practice of Wellworking.
	Getting things done	By thinking proactively and avoiding unhelpful attitudes, you can be empowered to achieve much more.
	Under pressure	Learn strategies to help you achieve a better understanding of your own response to pressure, and identify what support you need and how to ask for it.
	Sorted for stress	Effectively manage stress and nurture your resilience by building habits that optimise your energy reserves.
	Alone, not lonely	Find alternative ways to stay connected with others and combat loneliness when working in a hybrid or remote environment.
	Knowing me, knowing you	Create the conditions for everyone you work with to flourish together, no matter your differences.
	Pathfinder	Carve your own career path by learning the tools to take up new opportunities, engage in work and take control.
	Maxing meaning	Unlock your motivation by aligning your work with what matters most to you.

For managers

Driver	Name	Description
	Ever ready	Effectively prepare your team for change by fostering a positive mindset and ever-ready attitude.
	Delivering change	Overcome resistance and win supporters so that you can deliver change in the most impactful way.
	Are you OK?	Reaching out is tough. But missing the signs of struggle at work is worse. It's time to ask, how are you?
	Performance coaching	Create trust, psychological safety and understanding through regular coaching conversations.
	Goal setting	Motivate your team by setting stretching goals that not only support their personal aspirations, but those of the organisation too.
	Dynamic delegation	Adapt the tactics you use to delegate so that others can excel at the things that would otherwise be left to you.
	Play to strength	Fight the natural inclination to focus on weaknesses and learn how to get more energy from your team.
	Great feedback	Provide open, honest feedback that maintains engagement levels while improving performance.
	Held to account	Encourage your team to take ownership of their performance, so you can watch them shine without fear of them going off track.
	The in-crowd	Uncover the fascinating science of why we prefer people who are like us, and how we can include others.
	Make it matter	Motivate and engage your team by learning how to inject a sense of purpose into their roles.
	Peak performance	Elevate team performance by creating the optimal environment and providing effective, timely support.
	Shaping futures	Help your team to uncover their strengths and aspirations so that they can make the most of their careers.
	Inspire	Inspire and energise your team by levelling up the way you communicate with them.
	Motivate	Motivate others by understanding what internal and external drivers they respond best to.

Certainty eWorkouts · Competence eWorkouts · Autonomy eWorkouts · Belonging eWorkouts · Purpose eWorkouts

Combining Wellworking with Performa Precision Coaching for sustained behaviour change

Live sessions and eWorkouts are just the first step.

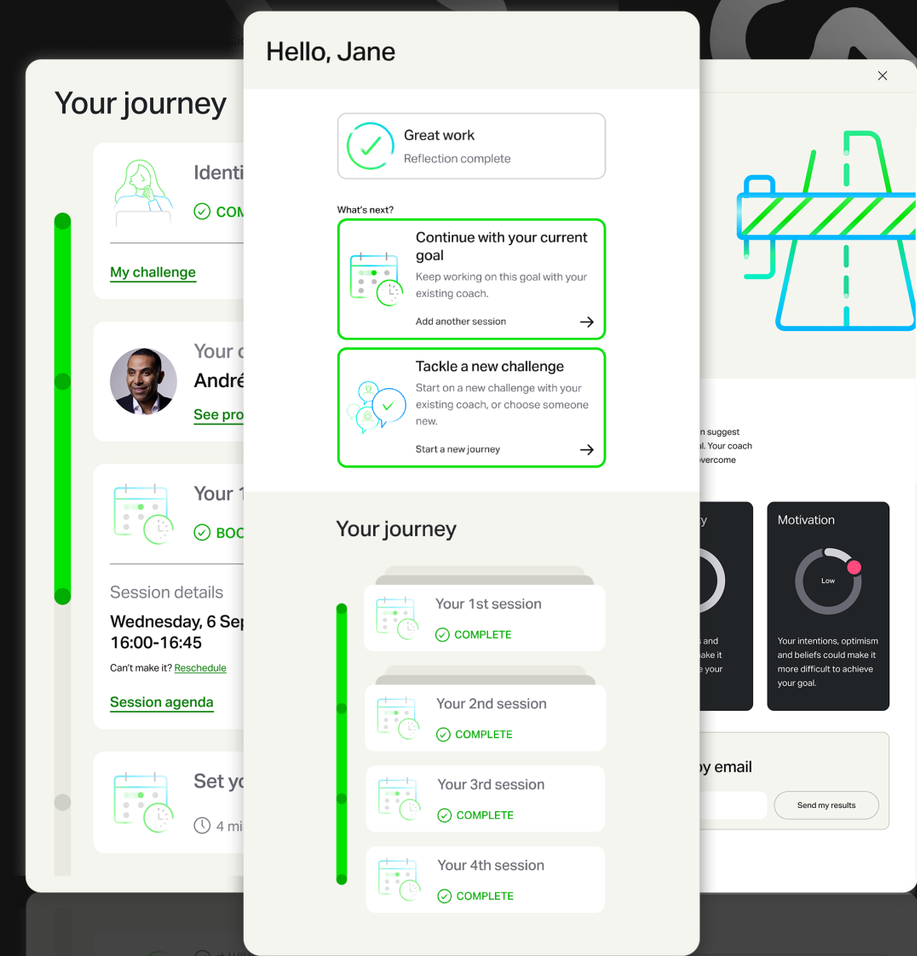
MindGym's state-of-the-art 1:1 digital coaching platform, Performa, translates new knowledge into long-lasting behaviour change by focusing on a specific, hyper-personalised goal with a coach.

Performa coaching helps create the climate for change.

C-suite coaching helps create the climate for change, giving leaders and managers the tools to lean in to the drivers that are most needed in their teams.

And when deployed at scale, coaching for individual employees can have a transformative effect on organisational culture and behaviour – strengthening and embedding Wellworking behaviours.

Performa coaches are all professionally accredited Master Coaches, trained in MindGym's unique Precision Coaching methodology. Precision Coaching is proven to change behaviour in 95% of coachees within just two weeks, delivering consistently transformative results at scale.



Hackathons to develop your Wellworking strategy

1. Methodology

A fun and fast-paced methodology to support collaboration.
Typical hackathon structure:

- First half - workshopping with key stakeholders.
- Second half - embedding feedback and evolving content.

2. Innovation

Drives innovation by crowdsourcing ideas across different stakeholders.

Creates buy-in and enables a sense of ownership.

3. Iteration

Allows real-time feedback from key stakeholders.

- Avoids to-and-fro emails.
- Builds a sense of agency and momentum.

4. Evolution

The core team reflects on the proposed iterations, evolves the content and comes one step closer to the desired goal.

Then we repeat the process until we have a final plan.

Work with our experts to co-create Wellworking interventions that complement your existing strategy and culture.

What do you get from a Wellworking hackathon?

The hackathon process is tailored to meet your needs, but here's an illustrative example of what will be covered.

Hack 1
A shared starting point

- Playback research, including insights from the diagnostic
- Uncover your unique blockers and challenges to employee wellbeing
- Align on key outcomes & how we will measure success throughout the programme

Hack 2
Our Wellworking strategy

- Understand audience needs
- Evaluate how the 5 drivers show up within company and cultural context
- Propose a Wellworking strategy that is tailored to differing needs in different parts of the organisation

Hack 3
Activating Wellworking

- Create learning solutions for specific audiences
- Walk through content from our portfolio of Wellworking IP
- Identify opportunities to tailor content to align with company values and increase resonance for all employees

Hack 4
Final review

Based on feedback of Hack #1, 2 & 3, we will:

- Stress test the proposed strategy
- Identify next steps
- Finalise plans for engagement, implementation and evaluation of Wellworking solutions

Case Study:

Winning Healthy Minds

Global healthcare company Sanofi exists to prevent, treat and cure illness and disease throughout life.

With more than 100,000 employees across more than 90 countries, Sanofi improves the health of communities and finds new solutions for patients. It does this by combining breakthrough science with advanced technology.

In 2020, Sanofi embarked on a six-year 'Play to Win' strategy, setting out to create an environment where everyone can bring their best version of themselves to work. In order to transform the practice of medicine, Sanofi wanted to create new behaviours, new ways of working and a new organisation.

Growth, innovation and efficiency would be accelerated and organisational structure and culture reinvented.

The challenge

As part of the 'Play to Win' strategy, MindGym was brought on board as a partner to help Sanofi implement a new wellbeing development framework, with the objective of reinforcing both healthy minds and a healthy working culture at Sanofi.

Sanofi was looking for a scalable, flexible approach, which would help employees, people managers and executive leaders develop strategies to improve their own wellbeing across a number of different areas.

Healthy minds
– Sanofi wanted to transform:

- Purpose & motivation (identifying individual purpose & drivers to enhance performance)
- Resilience & energy (managing energy effectively)
- Personal effectiveness (smarter working tools for an accelerated/digital context)
- Mindfulness (creating space and reflection to support personal perspective with self and others)

Healthy working culture
– Sanofi wanted to transform:

- EQ & empathy (awareness of others in order to support each other and encourage better connections)
- Inclusive leadership (leveraging diverse perspectives and collaboration to do more and better)
- Play to Win behaviours (recognising and promoting PTW behaviours)

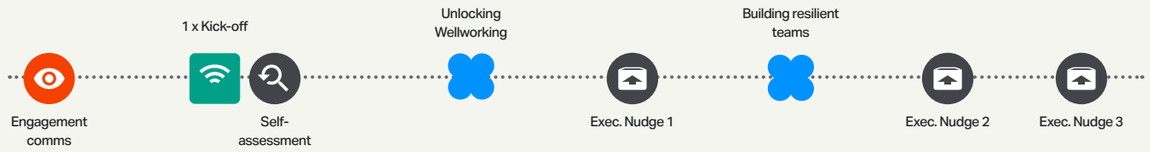
The solution

Together, Sanofi and MindGym co-created the 'Winning Healthy Minds' programme to provide a best-in-class behaviour change programme of live sessions, eWorkouts and engagement comms at all company levels. They started by creating and testing a pilot programme and conducting Focus Groups for those taking part.

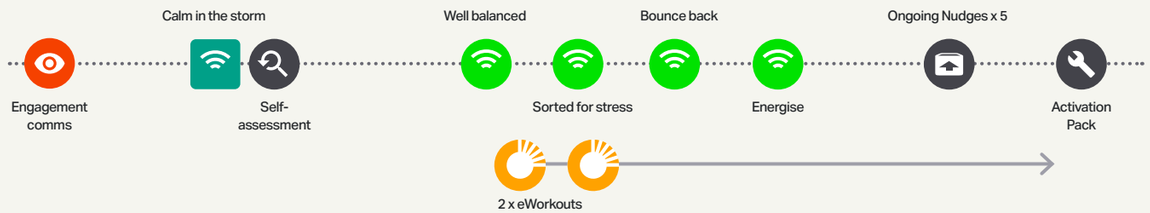
Following on from the pilot, MindGym incorporated solutions to address both illbeing (reducing the risk of burnout) and wellbeing (energising and engaging those who were ready to thrive) at all levels of the business:

- **Executive leadership:** MindGym worked with Sanofi's executive leaders to unlock Wellworking through the identification and mitigation of illbeing and driving wellbeing.
- **People managers:** Winning Healthy Minds empowered managers to learn to spot the signs of and prevent burnout, while energising and reinvigorating teams.
- **Employees:** Winning Healthy Minds equipped all Sanofi employees with a self-driven journey to build skills in personal resilience and energy management, supported by manager coaching.

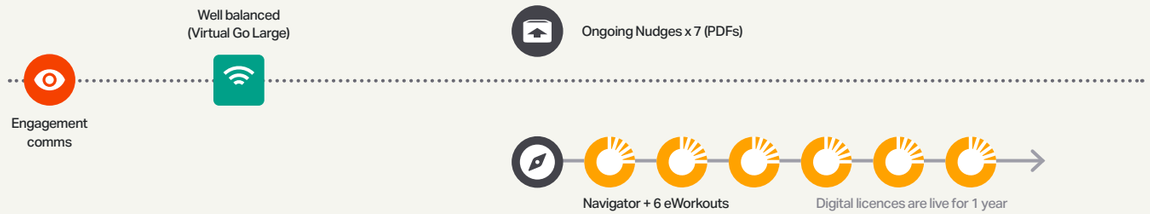
Executive leaders



People managers



Individual contributors



The impact

100%

of leaders in the large group sessions felt the content was relevant to them.

> Good tools to be used right after the meeting. The small-group format is very valuable for exchanges.

100%

of leaders in the large group sessions felt the session inspired them to think differently about this subject.

> Really appreciate having had the time to devote to this and connect with colleagues facing the same things.

100%

of executives in the small group sessions felt actively involved in the workouts.

> Highly energetic facilitation. Very actionable and tangible concepts shared that are easy to embed in day-to-day management.

Testimonials

'MindGym have given us a phenomenal programme, with strong, easily actionable insights on how to bring Wellworking to life across our population. We're delighted to be working together.'

Marcela Fernandes
Global Program Director of Leadership Offers, Sanofi

'This was a fantastic journey. Indeed, being in person, engaging & playing with colleagues, building on each other's thoughts & tactics was great. It got me to realize that I was not alone facing challenges to maintain my wellbeing at work.'

Lionel Bascles
Global Head Clinical Sciences & Operations,
Research & Development, Sanofi

'As we reshape our Executive & Leader Development portfolio to enable leaders to accelerate our Play to Win strategy, the Winning Healthy Minds learning journey has been highly impactful for our executives, people managers and individual contributors.

The program has brought incredible energy, practical tips and tools that are easy for employees to embed in their day-to-day, and an opportunity for colleagues to connect and learn from each other on important wellbeing topics. We are thankful to have partnered with MindGym to help us design and deliver this program across the company!'

Joanne Beardsley
Global Program Lead for Executive Development, Sanofi

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Appendix

Development Process of MindGym's culture and wellbeing diagnostics. Research and development were conducted by four trained psychologists. In the research phase they reviewed:

- More than 50 academic papers on the topics of organisational climate and culture as well as psychometric papers presenting validated general and specific surveys.
- MindGym's own research-backed Points of View.
- Two decades of front-line work supporting clients in successful cultural transformation.

All relevant constructs were assessed for potential overlap due to different labels being applied to the same underlying constructs. The final list contained 234 constructs.

In the item generation phase more than 1600 items were generated. The research team reviewed the items for redundancy and clarity, reducing the set to 647 items before testing in an online research sample (see next section for more detail). The scale for each construct contained 3 items except for a set of items rating organisational policies and programmes that were not considered relevant for reliability testing.

All scales were tested for internal consistency to understand how reliably the items were assessing the same construct and to identify problematic items. Cronbach's alpha for each of the scales can be found in the section for individual indexes.

Scale score correlations were considered to identify extreme overlap between scales indicating that they are measuring the same underlying construct. In individual cases scales were retained despite high correlations with other scales based on theoretical considerations (e.g. trust in line manager and trust in senior leadership showed a correlation of .81 in the research sample but are considered two different constructs).

For each scale the best item was chosen to reduce the number of items and create a number of items that is realistic to administer in an organisational setting. One-item measures are best practice in employee surveys and have been shown to be largely valid (Matthews et al. 2022).

Two psychometricians conducted the analysis and selected the items based on the following criteria:

- Distribution: lowest skewness and kurtosis, visual inspection of distribution for unusual patterns (e.g. bimodal distributions) and a mean closer to the mid-point of the scale to allow for better differentiation of responses
- Reliability: Cronbach's alpha if deleted as a proxy for how closely the item measures the same construct as the other two items in the scale
- Validity: higher correlations with other scales that are thematically similar, lower correlations with scales that are thematically less similar

Research Sample

The initial sample to test the questions and to serve as an initial benchmark was collected in June 2022 via the research platform prolific. Prolific is a platform that is provides access to a pool of participants that take part in paid online research and has been shown to result in high quality data compared to other providers (Peer et al. 2022).

In addition, responses were screened for quality through attention checks and responses that submissions with extreme completion times were also excluded from the analysis. The final sample consisted of 450 responses from the UK and the US.

Notes

'Groundbreaking.'

Sir Trevor Phillips,
Founding Chair, EHRC & NED, MindGym

'The next evolution in workplace wellbeing. Well done MindGym.'

Elaine Arden,
Chief HR Officer, HSBC

'Compelling research, original insights and practical solutions.'

Diana Conrad,
Chief People Officer, GSK

'Thoughtful, sensible and practical.'

Ronan Cassidy,
Chief Human Resources & Corporate Officer, Shell Plc

'A fresh perspective.'

Gene Chang,
Global Employee Experience Lead, Allianz

'The best yet from MindGym. BRAVO!'

Dr Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic,
Chief Innovation Officer, ManpowerGroup

'This work should cause all of us to rethink wellbeing in the workplace.'

Loren I. Schuster,
CPO & Head of Corporate Affairs, EVP,
The LEGO Group

'A joy and must-read for any CHRO.'

Joris Huijsmans,
CHRO, Carlsberg

'Sheds new and important light on wellbeing.'

Nigel Sullivan,
Chief People & Sustainability Officer, Bupa

'A tour de force.'

Dr. Lasana Harris,
Professor of Social Neuroscience
& Experimental Psychology, UCL

'Brings much-needed clarity and offers practical guidance.'

Amanda Cusdin,
Chief People Officer, Sage

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