

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

April Is Stress Awareness Month

How Employers Can Support Workplace Well-Being

By Dr. Joel Axler, *National Behavioral Health Leader*



Imagine walking into work each morning feeling energized, motivated and at ease. Now, contrast that with the all-too-common reality—tight deadlines, overflowing inboxes and constant pressure to perform. Stress has become a silent epidemic in today's workforce, affecting employees' mental and physical health while chipping away at productivity and morale.

April is Stress Awareness Month, a timely reminder that stress isn't just a personal burden—it's a workplace challenge that demands attention. For employers, this presents a unique opportunity to take a stand, foster a healthier work environment and equip their teams with the tools they need to thrive.

Work-related stress can stem from various factors, including:

- 1 High workloads and unrealistic deadlines
- 2 Lack of work-life balance
- 3 Poor communication and unclear expectations
- 4 Job insecurity and politically charged environments
- 5 Workplace conflicts

Stress affects more than just employees—it impacts the organization's bottom line. Studies show that stress-related absenteeism and reduced productivity cost businesses billions of dollars annually.¹ This means addressing workplace stress is not only the right thing to do but also a smart business strategy for employers.

Employers can take proactive steps to create a healthier work environment. Below are some effective strategies:

Promote Mental Health Resources

- Offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide confidential counseling services
- Provide access to mental health apps and virtual therapy sessions
- Normalize discussions about mental well-being to reduce stigma

1. *Financial Costs of Job Stress | Total Worker Health for Employers | CPH-NEW | Research | UMass Lowell*



Encourage Work-Life Balance

- Implement flexible work arrangements (remote work, hybrid schedules, or adjusted hours)
- Encourage employees to use their paid time off without guilt
- Lead by example—managers should model healthy work-life balance behaviors

Foster a Positive Work Culture

- Recognize and appreciate employees' hard work with praise and incentives
- Provide opportunities for career growth and professional development
- Encourage a culture of open communication and feedback

Offer Stress-Relief Programs

- Organize stress management workshops or mindfulness sessions
- Provide on-site wellness perks, such as yoga, meditation rooms, or fitness classes
- Create break spaces where employees can recharge

Evaluate Workload and Expectations

- Set realistic goals and deadlines to prevent burnout
- Regularly check in with employees to assess workload concerns
- Ensure fair and equitable distribution of tasks

As Stress Awareness Month approaches, now is the time for employers to take a proactive stance on workplace stress management. Consider launching a month-long campaign featuring:

- ✓ Lunch-and-learns on stress management techniques
- ✓ Wellness challenges with incentives for participation
- ✓ Manager training on recognizing and addressing stress in teams
- ✓ Anonymous employee surveys to identify key stressors

Organizations can create a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce by prioritizing employee well-being. This April, make stress awareness a priority—not just a conversation.



About the Author



Dr. Joel Axler, *National Behavioral Health Leader*

Dr. Axler is a board-certified child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist with more than 30 years of experience in academic, private practice and insurance settings. He is a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He remains in clinical practice and serves on several executive committees and organizations, including the Georgia Psychiatric Physicians Association and the Georgia Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.



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