

# Mindset Matters: 4 Mental Health Strategies To Increase Organizational Strength During COVID-19



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May marks Mental Health Awareness Month, and in this time of the coronavirus pandemic, it behooves us all to take this time to process the current state of affairs and think about our needs both individually and collectively. In this moment of social distancing, numerous weaknesses have been exposed from processes to institutional preparedness in various organizations from education to an assortment of industries across the corporate landscape. However, one of the most critical necessities that this pandemic has exposed is the need to enhance methods to meet the demands of an employee's mental health. We are watching in real-time how invisible disabilities are impacting corporate culture through a collective sense of fear and uncertainty causing anxiety, depression to other types of underlying physical and psychological pain that has been exacerbated by this sudden transition in our daily lives.

As we move forward in this new normal organizational strategy must see corporate health and wellness is paramount to deal with these new work-life challenges and develop a cohesive playbook for cultivating an optimal

work environment in this remote world of work. To assist in this process, we can once again draw from the Disability Narrative and see that the lived experience of disability can serve as a tool to help refine this process of work and offer employees the ability to manage a range of mental health issues to increase work performance and stay more agile in this new organizational design. Building on this concept four key elements are fundamental for continued growth in this new normal that all organizations should subscribe to:

## **Mindfulness**

The concept of Mindfulness is often described as the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. During the coronavirus pandemic embracing a recognition of mindfulness can be utilized as a necessary tool in managing one's mental health stressors in this new work environment. Mindfulness takes many forms and the ability to create a platform for awareness is essential. Mindfulness is predicated on the fact that you as an individual are paying attention to your needs and developing the mechanisms to deal with them. In the case of invisible disabilities and other mental health issues that arise from this new normal mindfulness may take shape in the form of finding balance, whether it is in a new way of working remotely or dealing with other stressors of a more confined life. By using exercise, meditation, or other activities to create a sense of greater equilibrium it is important to stay present and focus on the world around you and recognize two key factors, one, oftentimes you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable, and two, focus on what you can control rather than what you cannot.

## **Patience**

Fostering a sense of patience is often challenging in conventional times,

however, during this pandemic where so much of the day to day activities of our social lives have been suppressed, we are finding it harder to cope. Even in an age where many organizations have introduced remote work as an option within their corporate culture the forced decentralization of individual employees, teams, and other working groups has caused further strain that many companies were not yet prepared for. This underlying stress has illustrated the need for organizations to think about modeling ideas to exercise patience. There is both a skill and art to the practice of patience that cannot go underscored. In the age of remote work, patience becomes an even more significant commodity that needs to be harnessed. Organizations need to explore new avenues from both a training side as well as incorporating being patient into the arc of their workday as a key behavioral modification to amplify the cultural change that is happening in the present, for the future.

## **Gratitude**

Though we are living in uncertain times overwhelmed by various invisible disabilities and mental health issues from stress, anxiety, depression, and even a collective sense of loneliness we must try our best to appreciate what we have. In this time of fear and ambiguity, the great antidotes to this are having a sense of gratitude. Both individuals and organizations must understand the power of gratitude from providing morale to offering a sense of purpose, even in times of great duress. As the writer and neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote in his book *Gratitude* “I cannot pretend I am without fear. But my predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved; I have been given much and I have given something in return...” Applying the lessons of gratitude will be an essential ingredient in developing a more complete and healthy approach in this new workplace culture.

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## Connection

During COVID-19 our ability to connect has been profoundly compromised. In an age where technology can alleviate some of these issues, it is more critical than ever to leverage the value of technology from Zoom, Facetime, Skype, and numerous other social platforms. The digital revolution is already here, and organizations need to see these tools as vital not just as a substitute for social interaction, but rather an extension. Organizations must realize that the inherent nature of human beings is that of social creatures. Despite being imperfect, this mode of connection is essential in the long-term health and wellness of employees. Leadership must see connectivity as critical not only as a value add for work but a key social component in creating a stable and content remote worker of the future.

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