

# Creating Mentally Healthy Workplaces

by  MIND SHARE PARTNERS

**Truly supporting employee mental health goes beyond benefits and perks,** and investment in effective mental health initiatives like awareness-raising programs and mental health trainings have an average [6:1 ROI](#).

Based on [Mind Share Partners' work](#) with clients across industries, regions, and sizes, we created two key frameworks to help companies better understand how to proactively, comprehensively, and effectively support mental health at work.

**In this downloadable, you'll learn:**

## **I. The Ecosystem of a Mentally Healthy Workplace -**

*How is my organization supporting mental health at work?*

## **II. Key Success Factors for Mental Health Programs**

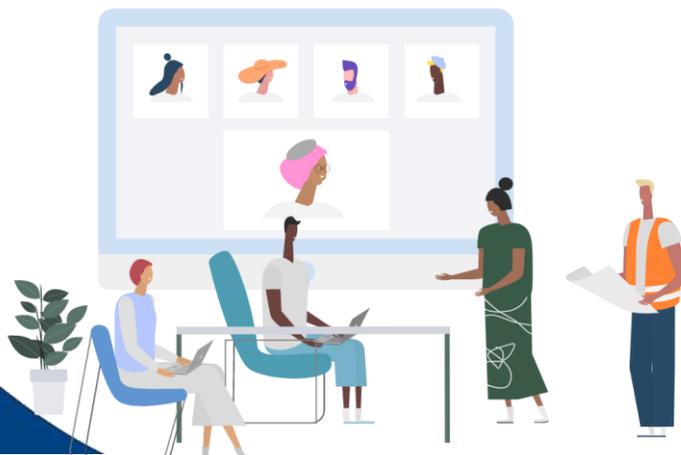
*How do I ensure a program or offering for mental health is successful?*

## **III. Case Study: Mental Health Days**

*How do I use these two frameworks together?*

**Want to incorporate our frameworks into a presentation to your organization or People leaders?** Download both frameworks as a PowerPoint presentation [here](#).

[Connect with us](#) to learn more about Mind Share Partners and how can help you create a mentally healthy workplace, or deepen your knowledge in mental health strategy by enrolling in our [certification program](#).



# I. The Ecosystem of a Mentally Healthy Workplace

Historically, good benefits, helpful EAPs, and generous time-off were the gold standard for supporting employee mental health. In recent years, this has been supplemented by the availability of self-care resources, mindfulness apps, and meditation programs. But there's more to it.

Our *Ecosystem* framework outlines key elements of a company culture that supports mental health. Use it to:

- Broaden what “workplace mental health” means to you, your leadership, and your people team.
- Understand how your organization is currently supporting workplace mental health.
- Identify what is missing and opportunities to grow a comprehensive support system for mental health.

People			Accountability
<b>Leaders</b> understand, visibly support, and normalize mental health.	<b>Managers</b> are proactive in supporting mental health and know how to respond to challenges.	<b>All employees</b> are aware of the mental health supports available.	<b>Mental health goals are measured,</b> tracked, and iterated on to meet the needs of the organization.  <b>Clear ownership</b> over mental health strategy and goals.  Strategy, programs, and practices are <b>inclusive</b> .
<b>Daily practices</b> and working norms are supportive of mental health.			
<b>Systems</b>	<b>Policies</b> name mental health and support mental health goals		
	<b>Benefits</b> are high-quality, well-understood, and accessible.		

## Checklist | *The Ecosystem of a Mentally Healthy Workplace*

To put the framework into practice, complete this *Ecosystem* checklist for your own organization.

- Leaders**
  - Do leaders understand, advocate for, and visibly model mentally healthy practices?
  - Do leaders normalize mental health through vulnerability?
- Managers**
  - Are managers trained to be both compassionate and compliant? (e.g., when checking in)
  - Do managers model mentally healthy behaviors?
- All Employees**
  - Do all employees have a shared understanding of why mental health matters?
  - Do all employees know what resource/s exist and how to access them?
  - Do all employees feel safe talking about mental health?
- Practices**
  - Is the daily experience of work supportive of mental health? (e.g., management practices)
  - Do teams regularly and proactively discuss practices and working norms?
  - Are harmful workplace practices and norms addressed? (e.g., lack of communication norms)
- Policies**
  - Is mental health named explicitly in relevant policies? (e.g., leave)
  - Does a clear mental health policy exist? Is it regularly referenced in decision-making?
- Benefits**
  - Are benefits high quality, widely accessible, and regularly assessed? Do they have parity?
  - Do employees know benefits exist and how to access them? Do they feel safe using them?
- Accountability**
  - Does a team or individual have ownership over mental health strategy, goals, and outcomes?
  - Do they have the time, bandwidth, and support from leadership to succeed?
  - Are there defined metrics that are regularly assessed and updated?
  - Are mental health programs inclusive of diverse identities and perspectives?
  - Are mentally healthy practices (e.g., regular check-ins) reinforced by performance reviews?

## II. Key Success Factors for Mental Health Initiatives

The *Ecosystem* framework was the “What?”—what your organization is doing to support workplace mental health. Now, is the “How?”—how to implement any part of the *Ecosystem*. Whether it be a manager training, benefits offering, or communications campaign, you want to make sure that it is well-executed and impactful.

This *Key Success Factors* framework outlines important considerations that define the staying power of a mental health initiative—whatever it may be—and its ability to truly create a safe and supportive culture for mental health.



### Checklist | Key Factors to Success

To put this framework into practice, run through the *Key Success Factors* checklist for any existing or new offering, program, or initiative to ensure that it makes a positive impact.

**Name of initiative:** \_\_\_\_\_

*E.g., manager training, benefits offering, communications campaign*

#### PREPARING —

- Resources.** Is there time, bandwidth, and budget to implement *and* access them?
- Sponsorship.** Are senior leaders advocating for the initiative? Are HR, and/or legal teams active collaborators?
- Safety.** Do employees feel safe? (e.g., talking about mental health, using resources, or giving feedback)

#### IMPLEMENTING —

- Evidence-based.** Does the initiative truly support mental health at work? If not, are there other resources that do?
- Integrated.** Is the initiative accessible across seniority, regions, etc.? Is it embedded in existing programs?
- Inclusive.** Is the initiative inclusive of and equally accessible to different identities, communities, and regions?
- Consistent.** Is the initiative proactive or reactive? Does it address moments of need and/or daily experience?

#### SCALING & EVALUATING —

- Awareness, access, and quality.** Are employees aware of the initiative? Can they easily access it? Is it effective?
- Reinforced.** Are there policies, practices, or norms that ensure the initiative’s success?
- Measurement.** Are there measures to track the use and success of the initiative?

## CASE STUDY

### III. Understanding the Value of Mental Health Days

To better understand how to use the *Ecosystem* and *Key Success Factors* frameworks together, this case study explores mental health days—a trending perk offered to employees as a resource to alleviate stress and burnout—through the lens of our two frameworks.

#### What are mental health days in the *Ecosystem*?

Mental health days are a **Benefit & Resource**—something offered by an organization to employees to take care of their own mental health.

Sometimes, organizations have explicit **Policies** around mental health days as well, with some naming them explicitly while others incorporating them into a broader bucket of sick days or time off.

That said, mental health days are only a resource within the **Systems** level. To ensure a truly comprehensive level of support for mental health, we must explore other strategies and offerings (e.g., working style conversations or leaders consistently modeling healthy practices) to complement these individual resources.

	People			Accountability
	Leaders understand, visibly support, and normalize mental health.	Managers are proactive in supporting mental health and know how to respond to challenges.	All employees are aware of the mental health supports available.	Mental health goals are measured, tracked, and iterated on to meet the needs of the organization.
	Daily practices and working norms are supportive of mental health.			Clear ownership over mental health strategy and goals.
Systems	Policies name mental health and support mental health goals			Strategy, programs, and practices are inclusive.
	Benefits are high-quality, well-understood, and accessible.			

#### So how do I make mental health days work?

When implemented well, mental health days can be a rejuvenating break that can prompts a conversation around mental health at work. When implemented poorly, employees will not use them, and they can actually reinforce a toxic cycle of coping and burnout.

To ensure that mental health days have a positive impact, run through our *Key Success Factors* to maximize their benefits. For example:

- |                      |                              |             |             |            |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Preparing            | Resources                    | Sponsorship | Safety      |            |
| Implementing         | Evidence-based               | Integrated  | Inclusive   | Consistent |
| Scaling & Evaluating | Awareness, Access, & Quality | Reinforced  | Measurement |            |
- Do employees feel safe taking time off? **Safety**
  - Do work loads, processes, norms, and policies allow for time off to truly be *time off*? **Resources, Reinforced**
  - Is use of time off is tracked and managers check-in supportively on employees who haven't used them. **Measurement**
  - Is time off equally accessible across seniority levels and backgrounds? **Integrated, Inclusive**
  - Is time off a part of a broader support network? (e.g., benefits, work norms, etc.) **Integrated, Reinforced**
  - Do leaders encourage and visibly model their use? **Sponsorship**

#### What's the verdict?

Mental health days have their utility, but their success is dependent on many cultural factors like how leaders and organizations encourage supporting mental health as well as day-to-day factors (like work-life balance) that may cause the need for mental health days in the first place.

Read more about mental health days in our *Forbes* article, ["The Futility of Mental Health Days."](#)

Ultimately, mental health days are just one resource within a broader mental health strategy. Use our frameworks to critically assess your programs and offerings to create a truly comprehensive, high-impact culture for workplace mental health.

**This might feel overwhelming!** Remember:

- **Don't be afraid to start small with a pilot**, and then assess, iterate, and scale.
- **Build on existing successes** like:
  - Other successful culture change efforts
  - Existing initiatives (e.g., *diversity, wellness*)
  - Existing support systems (e.g., *benefits, working norms, messages from leaders*)
- **No single program or strategy is perfect**, but leveraging a critical lens to evaluate the resources you provide can better ensure the wellbeing of your employees.