



EBOOK

# Prioritizing Caregiving Support for Employee Mental Health





# Introduction

Employee mental health continues to be a focus for employers. In fact, a WTW survey found that 86% of employers said mental health, stress, and burnout were top priorities for 2022<sup>1</sup>.

There are a number of great mobile apps and solution providers that aim to help employees cope with stress and anxiety, build resiliency, or support mental health through therapy, coaching, and other digital resources. But how can we think more holistically about supporting employee mental well-being?

Caregiving is deeply intertwined with mental health, and easing the demands of caregiving for employees is one way employers can alleviate a root cause of stress, anxiety, and burnout. **With 73% of all workers facing some kind of caregiving responsibility<sup>2</sup>, elevating the mental well-being of your workforce begins with the mental well-being of your caregivers.**

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<sup>1</sup> WTW. "Employers pinpoint workforce mental health as one of HR's top priorities for 2022" (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Harvard Business School. "The Caring Company" (2019)

# The caregiving mental health crisis

Caregiving can be a stressful and lonely experience. So many individuals providing care to loved ones experience isolation, feeling that the challenges they're facing are unique to them. That isolation has severe consequences for a caregiver's long-term physical and mental health.

**40- 70%**  
experience  
clinical symptoms  
of depression<sup>3,4,5</sup>

**49%**  
experience  
exhaustion<sup>5</sup>

**24**  
average hours spent  
weekly on care tasks<sup>6</sup>

**80.5%**  
have been providing  
care for more  
than a year<sup>7</sup>

Caregivers who are younger in age (18-24) as well as Sandwich Generation caregivers (those caring for younger and older loved ones simultaneously) are even more likely to report adverse mental health symptoms<sup>8</sup>.

**"I find myself drawn to a less friendly analogy: not that of fresh Wonder Bread slices gently squishing us, but that of panini grills pressing us flat."**

— ADA CALHOUN, ON THE SANDWICH GENERATION



For caregivers, that sense of being in a panini press doesn't always happen overnight. It builds with the uncertainty and ongoing toll of caregiving over time.



- ✓ Confusion navigating the healthcare system
- ✓ Hours spent on paperwork, appointments, and tending to loved ones' tasks of daily living
- ✓ Financial strain
- ✓ Decision fatigue
- ✓ Disruption of normal family life, less free time
- ✓ Worry and fear over their loved one's health
- ✓ Self-doubt that they've taken the right steps, asked the right questions, effectively advocated for their loved one
- ✓ Guilt about missing work

All of these add up to produce stress that can lead to mental health concerns like anxiety and depression. As part of the new approach to better mental health, employers can play an important role by supporting their caregiving employees. To support caregiver mental health, employers need to evaluate how they can best engage their employees in getting the support and care they need for their well-being.

<sup>3</sup> BCBSA. "The Impact of Caregiving on Mental and Physical Health" (2020)

<sup>4</sup> CDC. "Mental Health Among Parents of Children Aged <18 Years and Unpaid Caregivers of Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, December 2020 and February–March 2021" (2021)

<sup>5</sup> Business Group on Health. "Caregiving Supports Are Essential for Workers of All Ages" (2021)

<sup>6</sup> AARP. "Caregiving in the U.S" (2020)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Labor. "Navigating the Demands of Work and Eldercare"

<sup>8</sup> Journal of Affective Disorders. "Mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation among unpaid caregivers of adults in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic: Relationships to age, race/ethnicity, employment, and caregiver intensity" (2021)

# Getting creative: mental health benefits for caregivers

Caregivers are often told to focus on self-care. And many employers offer a plethora of well-being benefits, such as:

- ✓ Employee assistance programs (EAP)
- ✓ Therapy and professional counseling
- ✓ Workshops about managing stress and depression
- ✓ Mobile apps for mindfulness and meditation
- ✓ Discounted gym memberships, onsite fitness centers, and more

But finding the motivation, energy, and time to prioritize self-care can feel next to impossible for caregivers who are burning the candle at both ends. Even the best mental health app in the world can't give a caregiving employee more time back in their day.

What's more, the pandemic has taxed our mental health care systems that are already overwhelmed. Data from the American Psychological Association show that only 53% of psychologists report being able to meet the demand for treatment from their patients<sup>9</sup>.

Knowing that it's tough to find mental healthcare providers with time in their schedule and that typical offerings may not resonate, organizations must get creative about how they're supporting caregiver mental health.

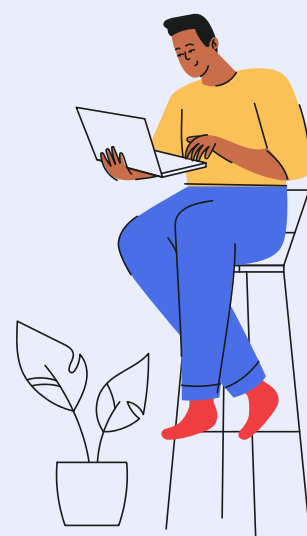
## Streamline the caregiving experience

While employees' face an incredible diversity of caregiving situations, nearly all will find it challenging, stressful, and time consuming to navigate our broken healthcare system for their loved one's needs. However, an answer exists to this complex issue. Employers can help streamline the caregiving experience through their benefits program. This allows employees to spend less time muddling through logistical and administrative tasks and more time focusing on their loved ones.

That's where a personalized concierge caregiving service like Wellthy can help. Getting connected with a dedicated care expert who knows the ins and outs of the system — and gets things done on the family's behalf — can save them countless hours in applying for financial assistance, locating providers, finding housing, in-home caregivers and everything in between.

In fact, Wellthy survey data shows that 9 in 10 members reported being better engaged and less stressed at work, and 92% said we saved them time (with 52% saying we saved them more than 10 hours, and 17% saying we saved them over 40 hours).

Assisting with caregiving challenges in this way reduces stress, helps ease the cognitive load for employees, gives them peace of mind that their family is receiving the best care possible, and can ultimately support better mental health.



<sup>9</sup> American Psychological Association. "Patients with Depression and Anxiety Surge as Psychologists Respond to the Coronavirus Pandemic" (2020)

<sup>10</sup> Wellthy Net Promoter Score (NPS) Response Data via AskNicely, Jan 1, 2020 through Dec 31, 2020. (2020)

## Promote communities for connection

When someone feels they are tackling care alone, social isolation can happen quickly, and mental health often suffers. Support groups are vital tools in preventing feelings of isolation among caregivers, allowing them a way to share their experiences with others who get it.

That's exactly why Wellthy recently launched an expert-moderated, peer network for our members called Wellthy Community. "We created Wellthy Community to empower caregivers to share challenges, ideas, and resources, and ultimately, make the act of caregiving a little less lonely," said Lindsay Jurist-Rosner, CEO and Co-founder of Wellthy. Whether it's starting a caregivers affinity group or ERG, partnering with a caregiving solution like Wellthy to offer a peer support tool, or promoting external groups for specific caregiving situations (i.e. the Alzheimer's Association), employers should aim to create safe spaces for caregivers to open up and connect with one another.

## Conclusion

Finding ways to alleviate the stress and isolation caused by caregiving should be a key piece of your organization's employee mental health strategy. Caregivers want to give the people they care about their love, support, and the best possible experience. But they can't do it alone. And when a caregiver's mental health suffers, it impacts everyone involved.



**Ready to offer your employees the caregiving support they need to care for themselves and their families?**  
We're here to help. Contact [sales@wellthy.com](mailto:sales@wellthy.com) to request a demo.