

LEAD THE WAY: MERCK'S INCLUSIVE BUSINESS CULTURE

Changing the way we think about mental health at work

Companies want to create cultures and climates that allow all employees to feel represented and included in the workplace. The advantages of employing people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives are well documented across many companies and industries, including better collaboration, stronger problem-solving, and superior performance. But workplace inclusion of people with disabilities is not just the right thing to do for a business, it's the right thing to do for employees. A recent study by Accenture found that companies that employ people with disabilities benefit from increased innovation, improved productivity, and a better work environment.¹

People living with mental health disabilities often experience a sense of stigma and are therefore an important focus area for workplace disability inclusion efforts. In accordance with EARN's mission, Merck is allowing us to share their innovative program to address mental health at work with the goal of replacing the silence and stigma associated with mental health with acceptance and compassion.

In the U.S., Merck conducted an analysis of its employees' personal health assessment data and medical and pharmaceutical claims information and found that stress, anxiety, and other mental health conditions have a prevalence that is at or above benchmark when compared to other companies. These findings underscored the need for Merck to prioritize mental health in its wellbeing and inclusion strategic plans.

MOVING THE NEEDLE ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

Awareness Training Spurs Action

To increase awareness of the prevalence and importance of mental health, Merck held a global webcast entitled "Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health" with Christine Moutier, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The level of employee engagement and feedback was impressive, indicating a high level of interest in mental health within Merck's workforce. Employees wanted to learn more. Based on its previous analysis and the desire for more mental health education, a cross-functional taskforce on mental health awareness was initiated.

One program that has been particularly impactful is [Mental Health First Aid](#), which is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance use issues. It is an eight-hour certification course offered to employees of all levels in the company. After course completion, graduates are offered an opportunity to become Mind Well Champions.



"A staggering one in three working-age adults in the U.S. experience a mental disorder, regardless of gender, age, race/ethnicity, or occupation."²

1 Accenture. 2018. [Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage](#).

2 National Comorbidity Survey Replication. 2007. Available at: https://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/ftpdir/table_ncsr_12month-prevgenderage.pdf

Ambassadors for Mental Health: The Role of Employees

Mind Well Champions are employee volunteers who make a personal commitment to help create an inclusive and supportive work environment that values overall employee health and addresses emotional wellbeing and mental health with compassion. Starting as a grassroots effort by employees taking the training course, Mind Well Champions have evolved into a highly engaged group of ambassadors who have expanded Merck's ability to support an emotionally safe work environment and a sense of inclusion for those dealing with mental health concerns.

Communication is Key

Mind Well Champions connect on a regular basis to learn about topics such as resiliency and mindfulness, receive updates on available resources, share best practices and experiences, and discuss how to best leverage their training and knowledge of resources to help support colleagues who are struggling with mental health issues. Specifically, the Mind Well Champions:

- **Host** monthly meetings to share information about programs and initiatives, gather feedback on current efforts, and generate ideas
- **Promote** and support programs and events such as [Mental Health Month](#), [World Mental Health Day](#), and [Movember](#).
- **Highlight** [NAMI's Stigma Free Awareness Pledge](#) and encourage employees to sign the pledge as a commitment to support an inclusive workplace. More than 700 Merck employees from around the globe have signed the pledge and made a commitment to provide a safe space to discuss mental health, listen without judgement, spread awareness of available resources, treat every person as capable and valuable, and speak out against stigma and discrimination.
- **Support** awareness and dissemination of Merck's mental health resources, especially the global Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Resources for Living.

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mind Well Champions have been particularly helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were instrumental in offering their own personal stories to advance the dialogue and minimize stigma. The Champions extended and expanded programmatic outreach to employees and created opportunities for people to share their struggles during the COVID-19 threat. This includes:

- Additional ways to connect with other employees during quarantine.
- A series of four weekly 30-minute "Mind Well Connect" webinars designed to focus on common concerns during COVID-19, including how to cope, challenges with parenting, ways to stay connected, and approaches to reduce stress.
- Extending Mindful Minutes – a telephonic program offered each day.
- Increased awareness and utilization of the Resources for Living employee assistance and work-life program.

► Learn more about Merck's response to the COVID-19 pandemic on [AskEARN.org](#)

Leadership and Conversations: Gaining Support from Leadership

Leaders play an important role in encouraging conversations about mental health and reducing the stigma of seeking assistance. This helps employees with disabilities feel more comfortable with self-identification. It also creates consistent messaging about how and where to access the multitude of mental health resources provided by the company.

Merck's leadership increasingly supports addressing mental health in the workplace and ensuring a culture of inclusion. One recent demonstration is Merck's membership in an organization called [One Mind at Work](#), whose goal is to develop and implement a gold standard for workplace mental health and wellbeing. Kenneth Frazier, Merck's CEO, signed the [One Mind at Work Charter](#), a pledge to transform workplace mental health and brain fitness approaches by committing to a series of best practices. Other leaders within the company participate in organizations such as the Business Group on Health and the Global Chief Medical Officer's Network, both of which have prioritized mental health in the workplace. These forums provide an opportunity to learn from other companies across industries and effectively address mental health disparities, promote brain health, and collaborate to achieve a society and health care system in which mental health is treated the same as physical health.



Understand How Merck Approaches Wellbeing

LIVE IT is Merck's holistic approach to wellbeing. It is designed by and for employees and their families to be healthier and more productive both professionally and personally. LIVE IT is comprised of four components: 1) emotional, mental, and financial health within BALANCE IT; 2) preventive services within PREVENT IT; 3) physical activity/movement within MOVE IT; and 4) nutrition within FUEL IT. LIVE IT serves as a call to action to our employees for enhancing physical, emotional, and financial health.

The BALANCE IT domain is of particular importance as Merck strives to ensure that its employees have access to resources to address mental health regardless of which country they work. In doing so, Merck made available programs, workshops, information, and tools on mental health topics, such as stress, anxiety, mindfulness, resiliency, and sleep. Merck is in its fourth year of providing Resources for Living, a global employee assistance and work-life program designed to help support employees. This includes resources and tools to help employees experiencing stress and the stigma associated with mental health issues. Examples of these efforts include:

- **Mental Health Global Webinars** feature experts on a range of emotional topics to help employees and their families maintain their emotional wellbeing.
- **Mindful Minutes** are designed to help reduce stress. The program provides a series of daily telephone-based guided meditations. Practicing mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment with an attitude of openness and curiosity. Studies show that being present can help employees feel less stress, enhance focus, and increase productivity.
- Through **Sleep Well**, Merck offers an online sleep guide to help employees learn more about sleep, improve their sleep habits, and make their sleep more restful.
- And for employees who are ready to make positive change, but don't know where to begin, **mySTRENGTH** helps them strengthen their mind, body, and spirit with eLearning modules, activity and mood logs, inspiration, and select goal-based content, including mindfulness training.



About Merck

Merck is a global biopharmaceutical company inspired by a shared vision and mission to save and improve lives. This commitment extends to our employees and their families. Because good mental health is a critical component to overall wellbeing, Merck has dedicated significant effort over the past several years to addressing the stigma and silence that often accompanies mental health, and create an environment of acceptance, compassion, and inclusion.

Our vision is to make a difference in the lives of people globally through our innovative medicines, vaccines, and animal health products. We are committed to being the premier, research-intensive biopharmaceutical company and are dedicated to providing leading innovations and solutions for today and the future.

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is a resource for employers seeking to recruit, hire, retain, and advance qualified employees with disabilities. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy under a cooperative agreement with Cornell University. For more information, visit [AsKEARN.org](https://www.askearn.org). Preparation of this item was fully funded by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy in the amount of \$8,000,000 (four-year total grant amount) under Cooperative Agreement No. OD-33975-19-75-4-36. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.