

CONNECTIONS

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Introducing Wellness Champions

Wellness is more than a buzzword and includes more than just our physical health. Wellness includes eight individual but overlapping areas including: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, financial, and environmental well-being. Exploring these areas can help individuals understand where they feel strong & supported, or become clearer on where they may need more support. By breaking this buzzword down into clearer and approachable categories, people can start to build greater self-awareness, recognize patterns, all in turn helping us reach our goals.

This is where Wellness Champions with EAP come in. Bimonthly, this program will focus on an area of wellness (or sometimes overlapping) to provide educational opportunities or an activity to help you explore. This programming empowers participants to use these areas of wellness as a guide for setting meaningful goals, building healthy habits, and finding ways to support one another on our own versions of wellness.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has **materials and posters available** to promote their wellness initiative.

Each dimension of wellness can affect overall quality of life. Through its Wellness Initiative, SAMHSA encourages individuals, organizations, and communities to work toward longer, healthier, and happier lives, particularly among people living with behavioral health conditions. The Eight Dimensions of Wellness take into account not only an individual's physical health, but all the factors that contribute to a person's overall wellness.

To learn more about the Eight Dimensions of Wellness, visit:
www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative



Source: Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.



Seasons greetings!

Welcome to the final 2025 EAP newsletter. We hope that you are able to enjoy the holiday season making memories, laughing and spending time with those that are important to you. Winter hit us with full force on Thanksgiving weekend with lots of snow and now the cold - welcome to Wisconsin!

In this newsletter you will find information regarding :

- A new initiative that EAP will be starting in 2026 (Wellness Champions)
- Data on EAP's Wellness conference that was offered in September 2025
- Tips for Holiday Resilience during uncertain times
- Navigating career and caregiving in the sandwich generation
- Mindfulness- How to be more present and less stressed
- Wordsearch

Enjoy the holiday season - be sure to take some time for yourself, take care and please know that we are here to support you in any way that we can.

~ Happy Holidays from the EAP Team



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Wellness Conference Summary

In September of 2025, EAP was able to provide our City Employees with the opportunity to attend a ½ day wellness conference. We had 2 sessions to choose from for each segment- Creativity, Learning and Movement.

■ Wellness Conference 2025

Building Resiliency & Thriving in the Workplace

■ Event Structure

- 2 sessions offered at 3 time frames (30 participants each)
- Max possible: 60 full-day attendees OR 180 single-session attendees
- Flexible registration: attend all, some, or just one

■ Session Tracks

Releasing Creativity

- Intention Cards (Edgewood College)
- Whimsical Watercolor Project (Ronnie Walter, MSCR)

Learning

- Decoding Your Body's Signals (Amy Albert, Reflections)
- Building Resilience & ACEs (Jean Daute, Oceanhawk)

Centering the Body

- Yoga Flow (Jo Temte)
- Gentle Yoga (Nichole Heste)

■ Attendance Snapshot

Registrations	Checked In	Final Participants	Departments
64	43	45 (70% of registrations)	17

■ Feedback Highlights

- 34 surveys completed (75%)
- 94% rated event **EXCELLENT**
- 100% would attend again ■

■ Participant Voices

"It was great and so well organized."

"Keep yoga!"

"Slightly more time per session... I'm slow at art but love it!"

"Great balance of options... Haven't felt this relaxed in a while!"

"More team building exercises would be amazing."

■ Key Takeaways

- Strong interest & high satisfaction
- Yoga & creative sessions highly valued
- Requests: more time per session, add team-building opportunities

■ **Overall:** A resounding success with broad engagement & strong potential for future growth!

Published on [workplacementalhealth.org](https://www.workplacementalhealth.org)

The pandemic has only increased the need for holiday resilience as we try to navigate a “new normal” while traveling, attending festive gatherings, and visiting crowded public spaces. While many are eager to resume “pre-pandemic” traditions, many new health and safety variables associated with COVID-19 are at play. The fear of exposure along with potentially uncomfortable conversations about a family member’s vaccination status and mask wearing etiquette, can have many questioning if it’s truly “the most wonderful time of the year.”

Here are some tips to consider:

Risk tolerance differs from person to person, so it's important to have open communication and set clear expectations amongst family and friends to make sure people feel safe and comfortable. Consider disclosing vaccination statuses and health vulnerabilities, making an agreement on testing and quarantine protocols as well as “house rules,” such as when to wear masks, how to greet one another (waves, fist bumps or hugs), and the size/location of gatherings.

In this season of gratitude and giving, one's generosity doesn't always mean reaching into their wallet. Time and energy are unique, and often our most important currencies that should be spent with your best interest in mind. The tendency of overcommitting so not to disappoint others can create unhealthy boundaries and result in burnout. Give yourself the gift of peace by building in time for self-care and creating opportunities to recharge and reflect on your needs and priorities. Be kind to yourself and practice positive self-talk.

While it can be easy to get wrapped up in the gifts and distracted by planning the perfect dinner party, take time to reflect on what you are truly grateful for and acknowledge those people and experiences. Although a slightly dried out turkey may seem like the end of the world in the moment, your loved ones will only remember the laughs and smiles shared. Be realistic and flexible with expectations by focusing on the true meaning of the holidays.

The holiday season is filled with temptations – the temptation to overindulge while breaking bread with loved ones, the temptation to stay out celebrating a few extra hours and skipping that morning workout. While these activities may feel like the right decision in the moment, the temporary satisfaction could increase overall anxiety and stress levels. By practicing mindfulness and balance, you can enjoy the special holiday treats and activities while also maintaining adequate sleep, exercise, and a nutritious diet.

For many, the holidays are filled with toasts to good health and cheer. These celebrations built on good intentions though can lead to temptations of overindulgence and misuse. The misuse of alcohol and drugs to temporarily cope with emotions and uncomfortable situations can lead to ones' anxiety and depression worsening. Rather than using alcohol and drugs "to take the edge off," seek alternative healthier mechanisms like talking with a friend, walking outside or journaling. If you're looking for help for drug or alcohol use, see the federal government's treatment locator or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

[illegible]

LEADERSHIP *Matters*

Navigating Career and Caregiving in the Sandwich Generation

Posted on workplacementalhealth.org

Early and Mid-career professionals now make up the majority – 54% – of the U.S. labor market. This means that working individuals are more likely than not to be Millennials or Gen-Z (45 years old and younger).

The “sandwich generation” traditionally refers to individuals who have primary responsibility for caring for dependent children and elderly relatives while also working outside the home. Sandwiched caregiving is most common during early and middle adulthood, when adults are also balancing their own health, aging, career, and financial well-being. The average caregiver is estimated to be 41 years old, and the age of new caregivers is trending even younger.

It is estimated that about 11 million Americans are providing care for both a child and an adult. More recent studies on sandwiched caregivers have reflected the changing care landscape by expanding the definition of sandwiched care to include caring for a child and any adult, not just aging parents.

It’s important to acknowledge that much of caregiving is considered “invisible work.” For many, money talks, leading researchers to continue working on estimating the value provided by caregivers. One study estimated that the value of non-monetary contributions by sandwiched caregivers was nearly \$691 billion per year.

As the age of caregivers continues to trend earlier in adulthood, it is crucial to recognize that a significant number of future leaders are or will become caregivers. Organizations that recognize the trends and the need to support these employees in order to retain them have begun providing support and tailored benefits for working caregivers.

When examining best practices that cater to the needs of early- to mid-career professionals and those that support working caregivers, there is considerable overlap.

Flexible Work Arrangements, Schedules and Time Off Options

Flexibility is one of the most meaningful benefits a business can offer to its working caregivers and younger professionals. Alternative schedules, job sharing, and remote or hybrid work arrangements are sought after by early to mid-career professionals. Specific to caregiver benefits, some organizations offer options like:

- Shared or donated time off
- PTO rollover
- PTO company “matching” program
- Unlimited vacation

Creating a Workplace Culture That Promotes a Sense of Safety, Support, and Authenticity

We know that Millennial and Gen Z workers want their job to give them a sense of purpose and allow them to feel engaged in the company. This type of workplace culture benefits all workers, but for young professionals in particular, it has a meaningful impact on their work-related mental health and willingness to remain with an employer. The same is true for working caregivers. Having open communication from the leadership level, providing benefits employees truly want, and building camaraderie through peer support programs and employee resource groups can all help to retain the new generation of leaders, especially those juggling responsibilities at home.

Addressing, Normalizing and Supporting Employee Mental Health

Millennials (35%) and Gen-Z (35%) report feeling stressed or anxious a majority of the time, listing work and lack of work-life balance as top contributors. Failing to keep pace with demographic changes and the needs of growing generations means risking falling behind, stagnating, draining talent, and lagging in innovation. Add in the fact that many studies focus on the mental and physical health impact that caregiving roles can have on individuals, especially as they juggle that invisible work with their careers. Providing and promoting mental health benefits through work is important for everyone, but for caregivers it can be the difference between seeking help in a timely fashion or spending prolonged time struggling. When employees are aware of their benefits and comfortable actually accessing them, utilization goes up.

FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

Resilience

“Our inborn capacity for self-righting”

“The ability to overcome the odds and thrive in the face of adversity”

Common “Transition” Reactions	Hopeful “Transition” Reactions
Fear of the unknown High stress levels Confusion Worry Anxious Uncertain of skills and abilities Exhaustion/fatigue Questioning your value	Excitement New start Mixin’ it up! Purge and new beginning Others?

Resilient Employees

- Have a strong sense of purpose and meaning in their work
 - » In Burnout: Seek advice and assistance to regain that initial sense of purpose and meaning, or explore alternatives
- Focus on things you can control, reframe or seek out alternatives for things you currently have little or no control over
- Able to cope with ongoing and disruptive change
 - » See change as a challenge to overcome or an opportunity for growth
- Generally optimistic
- Have a good social support
- Feel supported at work, have support outside of work
- Have a good sense of humor
- Work to take care of their body and mind
- Work/life balance

How to Build Resilience: Stress Management

Exercise

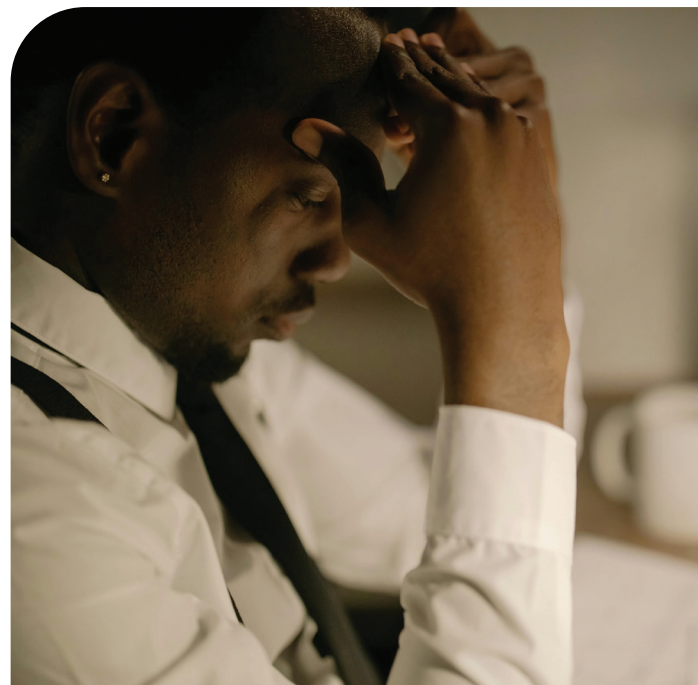
- Decreases your risk of cardiovascular disease
- Protects against brain aging and cognitive decline
- Stimulates the formation of new neurons

Meditation

- Decreases Blood Pressure
- Silence and quieting the mind can allow for thoughts to be processed, and new answers to come forward

Mindfulness

- More present and accepting of surroundings
- Helps you stay present into the reality of right now, rather than focusing on the stress of the past or future



Mindfulness: How to Feel More Present and Less Stressed

Published in **AllOne insights newsletter**

We live in a world that moves fast—work deadlines, family needs, social media, traffic, the news. With all the noise and commotion, it's easy to feel like your mind is always jumping from one thing to the next.

That's where mindfulness comes in. It can help you manage your mind and your ongoing thoughts.

Understanding Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgment. It means being aware of your thoughts, feelings, body, and surroundings as they are, instead of constantly reacting or getting pulled into “what's next” or “what if.”

It's not about emptying your mind or reaching a state of total calm. It's about noticing what's happening right now. You're curious, compassionate, and under control.

Mindfulness vs. Autopilot

Most of us spend large chunks of the day on autopilot. You're driving without noticing the route, eating without tasting the food, and scrolling without realizing how you feel. That's normal, but it can also keep you disconnected from yourself and the people around you.

Mindfulness invites you to step off that mental treadmill. It doesn't mean ignoring reality—it means facing it more clearly, with more consideration and less reactivity.

The Health Benefits of Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness throughout the day can lead to big benefits. Studies show it can:

- » Lower your stress levels
- » Improve your focus and sleep
- » Reduce anxiety and symptoms of depression
- » Help manage chronic pain
- » Support heart health and immune function

Mindfulness also helps you become more emotionally aware, making it easier to respond thoughtfully rather than react automatically—at work, at home, and in stressful situations or relationships.

How to Practice Mindfulness in Daily Life

You don't need to sit on a cushion or block out an hour to practice mindfulness. You simply build mindfulness into your everyday life by doing simple things like:

- » Taking a few deep breaths before responding to an email
- » Noticing the taste and texture of your food during meals
- » Going for a walk and paying attention to your surroundings
- » Pausing to check in with yourself and how you feel, physically and emotionally

The more you practice, the easier it becomes to bring mindfulness into your everyday life.

How AllOne Health Can Help

If you're feeling overwhelmed, our counseling services can help you manage stress, feel more grounded, and take steps to improve your mental and emotional health.

Support is free, confidential, and available to you and your family members 24/7/365. To learn more, visit **Member Support**.



Wellbeing

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THOUGHTS
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 FEELINGS
 POSITIVE
 POWERFUL

GROWTH
 MINDSET
 KIND
 AWARENESS

CHAMPION
 WELL BEING
 MINDFUL
 BEHAVIOUR

RELAX
 REFLECT
 MOTIVATION
 RESPECT

In Wisconsin, Help is 3 Numbers Away

2.1.1

Get Connected • Get Help™

211 maintains a comprehensive database of community resources and provides information and referrals for essential needs like:

- Food
- Housing and Shelter
- Utility Assistance
- Healthcare Services
- Government Services

211 also can connect people with information and referrals for:

- Substance Use / Mental Health Resources
- Transportation
- Legal Services
- Counseling and Support Groups
- Disaster Aftercare

988 provides support when a person, or someone they know, is experiencing a crisis:

- Thoughts of Suicide
- Mental Health Crisis
- Substance Use Crisis
- Emotional Distress

Referrals as needed, utilizing 211 WI's Resource Database

911 provides first responder dispatch for:

- Medical Emergency
- Fire
- Reporting a Crime
- Disaster Response
- Life Threatening Situation



*Thanks for reading,
we hope you found the information useful!*

**You can reach any of us by calling the
EAP Office at (608) 266-6561**

**External Available 24/7:
AllOne Health (800) 236-7905**

Arlyn Gonzalez, agonzalez@cityofmadison.com
Provides bilingual EAP services in English and Spanish

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To learn more about your external EAP services, please contact AllOne Health at 1-800-236-7905 or sign in to **AllOne Health member portal** (for instructions on how to create your account, please visit the **EAP website**).