



# Gameplan

## WELLNESS

Prepared for.

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# 12 Steps For Complying With Employment Standards Law Maternity Leave Requirements

## WHAT IS WELLNESS?

Wellness can be defined in many ways as it affects various aspects of our day-to-day lives. Physical wellness can look like making time to go to the gym and get a good sweat in, or making sure you're incorporating enough nutrient-rich foods into your diet to keep your body and brain performing their best. There is also wellness in respects to mental health, where the practice can look like booking a therapy appointment for yourself when dealing with emotional turmoil, or managing stress at the office by confiding in a trusted supervisor or taking a mental health day. [The National Center For Emotional Wellness](#) defines emotional wellness as "an awareness, understanding and acceptance of our feelings, and our ability to manage effectively through challenges and change."

Wellness means taking care of yourself in every way – whether it be emotionally, mentally, physically, or even spiritually. There are small things you can do to incorporate wellness into your everyday life, like taking 30 minutes before bed to read a good book and improve your sleep, or going for a walk on your lunch break to get out of the office (or out of the house if you work remotely). We have partnered with Wellable

to provide you with some tips for all forms of wellness that you can incorporate into your routine to help manage stress inside and outside of the workplace.

## PHYSICAL WELLNESS BEST PRACTICES

One of the best things you can do for your body is mindful movement – meaning exercise and stretching that works all areas of the body and brings you joy. Exercise stimulates various reactions in your brain, immune system, and cardiovascular system – and the release of certain chemicals you feel when you get a good sweat in enhances your mood and relieves pain.

In the short term, just 30 minutes of exercise a day will help you to feel more motivated and energized before, during, and after work. [Aerobic exercises, like walking and jogging, are extremely beneficial to cognitive health.](#) Making time for exercise before or after work – or even on your lunch break – provides long-term effects in brain function, like problem solving skills and improved memory.

**Some physical wellness best practices you can partake in as an employee include:**

- **Going for a short walk** after meals to promote digestion and help you get outside on your lunch break.
  - **Eat a balanced diet** of fruits, whole grains, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats like eggs or avocados. Find a diet that works well for you and provides you with plenty of energy.
  - **Exercise for an effective amount of time** – professionals suggest at least 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes a week.
  - **Drink at least 8 cups of water** a day to avoid dehydration – you will feel better and see improvements in your energy, skin’s appearance, and digestion!
  - **Stay consistent with your exercise regimen** or else you will get tired of it quickly! Picking exercises that you enjoy like walking or cycling will encourage repetition and help you make a habit of it.
  - **Practice office ergonomics.** Equip your desk or home office setup with a chair that helps your posture, a wrist support, and other features that help you avoid hunching and “tech neck”.
  - If you get bored while exercising, **create a great playlist** or listen to one of your favourite podcasts. If you’re on an exercise bike or a stationary machine, you can even set up your phone or tablet to play a TV show or movie.
  - **Get 7-9 hours of sleep each night to prevent workplace fatigue.** To get a better sleep, avoid screentime right before bed and avoid going to bed at a late hour (especially if you need to wake up early for work).
  - **Remember to stretch**, especially if you sit at a desk all day. Cramps can occur due to overexertion and dehydration, especially if you don’t stretch before and after exercise. It’s great to make it a habit to stretch when you wake up in the morning and before you go to bed.
  - **Limit your use of alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs.**
  - **Practice good hygiene** and do so in a way that makes it more enjoyable – whether it means investing in a waterproof shower speaker or adding some soothing serums to your skincare routine, good hygiene means you look, feel, and smell your best!
  - **Attend regular checkups** from the doctor and dentist.
- If you are an employer:**
- **Encourage your in-office and remote employees to take short breaks** every hour and walk around the office or their home to avoid restless legs.
  - **Allow flexibility in work hours** so employees can incorporate healthy habits into their days.
  - **Use apps like [Wellable](#) to incentivize employees** to actively commute, exercise after work, and build a work culture of being active.
  - **Create work events around physical activity/getting outdoors** – think after-work sports leagues or taking company meetings outside!
  - **Incorporate physical activity into your company’s benefits package**, such as allowing spending room for subsidized

gym memberships or monthly wellness benefits.

## MENTAL WELLNESS BEST PRACTICES

Many people think that health begins and ends with physical fitness, and that could not be further from the truth. Taking steps to improve your mental health and having stress-relieving coping mechanisms in your proverbial toolbox will help you prevent burnout at work and at home.

It's really easy to get caught up in various projects at work to the point where you forget to take care of yourself – whether that means taking some time to practice a favourite hobby of yours after work or stepping away from your computer screen for a second to give your brain a break. While you take care of your physical wellness, you should also put the same amount of energy into taking care of your mental wellness.

### Some mental wellness best practices you can partake in as an employee include:

- **Meditation** – there are plenty of apps like Headspace or websites like YouTube where you can practice meditation for as short or as long as you'd like. Guided meditation can help you practice gratitude, relieve stress, and calm any anxieties you may be feeling surrounding work and life in general.
- **Deep breathing**, which is one thing you can do both at home and in the office. Stressed at work? Getting ready for a big meeting? Practice deep breaths to calm your nervous system and your mind!
- **Connect with your loved ones** – if you can, call a family member or friend on your lunch break or after work to destress after the day. If you live with your family, talk to

them and hug them as much as possible – hugging and honest communication releases endorphins and relieves stress.

- **Aromatherapy can be a powerful stress-relieving tool**, so surrounding yourself with candles that make you happy or spritzing your work sweater with a scent that reminds you of home can help you get through the day and calm down in stressful moments – just make sure to check with your office's scented products in the workplace policy!
- **Practice being creative in your spare time** – whether that means taking a painting class on the weekends or journaling after work, getting your thoughts and feelings on paper can be such a wonderful brain exercise.
- **Be kind to yourself!** You have worked hard to get where you are and speaking to yourself in negative ways and terms won't motivate you to do better or help you be more productive in any way. Leave affirmations on sticky notes around your computer and say three things you love about yourself in the mirror every morning while getting ready – you'll be shocked at the difference it makes in your confidence.
- **Confide in a trusted supervisor, colleague, or your office HR manager** when you feel overwhelmed and close to burnout. Having someone to talk to can help you prioritize your goals, make a plan of action, and take a break when you need it.
- **Build healthy habits and a solid routine.** Making sure you prioritize your self-care and take the time to get done what you need to get done will help alleviate workplace and at-home stress.

## If you are an employer:

- **Check in with your employees.** If you have noticed that an employee has been acting “off” or if you know they recently went through a difficult life change, ask if they would like to talk and keep your office door open to them.
- **Encourage employees to take breaks,** which include grabbing a healthy snack and going for a short walk around the office to stretch their legs.
- **Facilitate work-life balance for yourself and your employees** to relieve workplace stress and avoid burnout.
- **Provide mental health resources and employment benefits** that you know will help your employees when they need it – maybe it’s a Wellable account, affirmations on a bulletin board in the breakroom, or a monthly credit towards therapeutic activities.
- **Take care of yourself** – you cannot provide guidance, advice, and open communication if you are not checking in with your own wellness every day!

## WORKPLACE FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE STRESS

Some common workplace stressors that you may have come into contact with during your own career include interpersonal conflict (conflict with fellow employees or managers), physical discomfort (whether it’s due to improper ergonomics or heavy lifting), disorganization (a cluttered workspace leads to a cluttered mind), multitasking leading to an overwhelming feeling regarding the amount of work you have to do, and a lack of work-life balance.

Stress refers to any change that can happen at home or in the workplace that causes physical, emotional, or mental strain. Stress is your body’s response to anything that requires attention, and the way you respond makes a big difference to your overall wellbeing. But what exactly causes stress?

## EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL STRESSORS IN THE WORKPLACE

Some external factors that can stress you out in the workplace include the environment itself (maybe your work-from-home office setup is cramped and dark, or maybe your workplace’s ventilation is poor or there is an annoying hum coming from the breakroom fridge), financial factors (perhaps you didn’t get that bonus you were hoping for, or the amount of work you’re doing outweighs the amount you are being paid), life events (real-world happenings like divorce, illnesses, or injuries), and workplace bullying (like blatant discrimination based on appearance, sex, or role in the workplace).

Some internal factors that can stress you out in the workplace include daily pressures (thinking about being away from your family while at the office, feeling extreme pressure from work demands, and even the stress of your commute), traumatic emotional life events (like break-ups, losing a loved one, or mental health struggles), social issues (like social injustice or politics that affect your autonomy or rights), and imposter syndrome (stressing yourself out to always do better because you already think you aren’t good enough or deserving of your job).

Dealing with external workplace stressors that can be as literal as a patch of ice in front of your office entrance that causes you injury or as abstract as cyberbullying for people in social media-facing roles, while internal workplace stressors can be as small as presenting a big project the night after being ghosted by your

Tinder date or as big as silently grieving the death of a loved one and having trouble focusing at your desk, all stressors are valid and can be made worse by certain factors, including mental health struggles, lack of available resources, or poor management/HR direction putting more pressure on you.

## **DEALING WITH SAD & FATIGUE**

The holiday season is a time of great stress for many people. Along with the pressure to get things done before the end of the year, workers face significant financial demands in the months of November and December. Holiday stress can also be the result of physiological factors in the form of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of mental depression that impacts most individuals as sunlight gradually decreases during the fall and winter months.

For many businesses, the holiday season is the time for working long hours and putting in extra shifts. These time demands and stress may interfere with your sleep, resulting in fatigue that makes workers not only less productive but more vulnerable to errors and injuries. Some best practices you can partake in to prevent this include:

- Train workers on the hazards, symptoms, and causes of fatigue and how to minimize them.
- Objectively assess your staffing arrangements, including workers' current workloads and work hours and determine if they're contributing to fatigue.
- Encourage light therapy in and out of the workplace and let the sunshine in (while it's shining!)
- Analyze recent absence patterns for indications of worker fatigue.

- Arrange schedules so that workers have ample time for rest during the workday and sleep after it ends.
- Make adjustments to lighting, temperature, physical surroundings, and other aspects of the work environment to increase alertness.
- Make sleep health part of your company's wellness program.
- Implement a workplace fatigue risk management system.

## **CREATING A WELLNESS PROGRAM**

Stress can impact your workers via decreased productivity, increased errors, miscommunication or poor communication due to mental fog and irritability, burnout, and absenteeism. As an employee, you can stay on top of your stress and maintain productivity by:

- Creating a routine/schedule that allows for short breaks to recharge.
- Prioritizing tasks accordingly, helping you feel less stressed once urgent projects are out of the way.
- Breaking tasks down into smaller tasks to make them appear more manageable.
- Using time management techniques and establishing deadlines so you can avoid multitasking and overwhelming yourself.
- Decluttering your office space.
- Asking for help when you need it, whether that means delegating tasks to a colleague who has the time to help or asking to speak with your HR director about anything that is troubling you.

- Taking mental health days every now and then and truly rest and feel rejuvenated once you return to the office.

As an employer, you should establish best practices for workplace wellness and implement a policy so your employees know that their workplace respects and acknowledges stress and its impact on mental health and productivity. When creating your workplace wellness model, you should follow these steps:

1. Serious commitment and involvement from senior management.
2. All levels of staff are involved with planning.
3. The focus is on employees needs.
4. Use of on-site experts and facilities.
5. The mission, vision, values, and goals are supported by policy.
6. Integration of lifestyle choices, social conditions, and work environment.
7. Individualized to the needs of the worksite.
8. Ongoing evaluation of key indicators, measures, and outcomes.
9. Long term planning and commitment.

A comprehensive approach consists of elements from the following categories:

- **Health Practices:** enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles, behaviours, and coping skills.
- **Physical Environment:** addressing the health and safety of the worksite.
- **Social Environment and Personal**

**Resources:** enhancing the culture of an organization.

## FURTHER RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYEES & EMPLOYERS

Whether you're creating a wellness compliance plan for your office or you're an employee looking for resources to keep your stress levels at bay, here are some great resources from HRInsider and Wellable that will help you get through any season, project, or exterior factor that may be impacting your productivity and mood.

[Supporting Employees with Wellness](#)

[Workplace Wellness Guide](#)

[Addressing Barriers to Workplace Health & Wellness Initiatives](#)

[How well do your employees know and use their health and wellness benefits plan?](#)

[Popular Employer Wellness Programs Offered in Canada](#)

[The Best Mental Health Apps \(Free & Paid\)](#)

[General Health Content to be Your Best Self](#)

*Do you have questions about creating an enforceable workplace wellness policy or what your rights are as an employee regarding taking mental health days? No matter what's on your mind, you can always [Ask the Expert](#) on HRInsider!*

## **Thank you for your interest.**

To access a model policy & online training for employees on types of leave, as well as useful tools and checklists that you can implement today, visit [www.HRInsider.ca](http://www.HRInsider.ca).

### **Get in touch.**

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