



LIVE
LOVE
LAUGH®

Transforming Mental Health in Corporate India

A Roadmap for Action



“This report is an invitation to act, to lead, and to build workplaces where people and organizations can truly thrive.”

Anisha Padukone
CEO - The Live Love Laugh Foundation

An Invitation to Business Leaders

In the past decade, we've seen India's mental health landscape change in meaningful ways. There are encouraging signs that the taboo towards mental illness has weakened. Prevention is now part of the conversation. And mental health is increasingly seen through a human lens, not just a medical one.

The pandemic brought this shift into sharp focus. Businesses could no longer treat mental health as a “good to have.” Stress, anxiety, and burnout became common, touching every workplace. Leaders now see that these are not just personal struggles; they also shape culture, productivity, innovation, and retention. The challenge, however, is clear: how do we move from intent to lasting action?

At The Live Love Laugh Foundation, our work with corporates has shown that progress takes more than short-term fixes. It calls for leadership commitment, systemic integration, and a clear roadmap that links well-being with performance. Yet many organizations, despite growing awareness, remain unsure of how to take the next step from intent to sustained action.

This Report is meant to support that journey. It draws on data, industry insights, and lived experiences of leaders who are walking this path. The message is clear: mental health is a strategic imperative. Investing in it builds resilience, trust, and long-term business success. I hope you see this report not only as a document, but as an invitation to reflect, to act, and to lead. Together, we can create workplaces where mental health is part of culture and leadership, and where people and organizations can unlock their potential and truly thrive.

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“Mental health is an integral part of overall well-being, and organizations must recognize its impact on productivity, creativity, and resilience. A stressed and disengaged workforce hampers innovation and efficiency, ultimately affecting business outcomes and the broader economy.”

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
Chairperson, Biocon Group

Executive Summary

In India, mental health challenges are widespread and growing.

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study in 2017 by The Lancet (Psychiatry)¹, estimated 197.3 million Indians, (roughly equivalent to **one in seven Indians**), were affected by mental disorders of varying severity.



Within the workforce, nearly half of all professionals surveyed cite workplace-related stress as the biggest factor affecting their mental health (Deloitte India, 2022)². **59%** of Indian employees report burnout symptoms (The McKinsey Health Institute report “Reframing employee health: Moving beyond burnout to holistic health”, 2023).

These challenges have significant financial implications. The McKinsey Health Institute in 2024 estimates that improving employee health and well-being could unlock an annual economic opportunity of improved employee health and well-being in India totaling to **USD 350 billion** annually³.

Against this backdrop, this report by The Live Love Laugh Foundation positions mental health as a core business priority, moving beyond one-off initiatives, and provides a practical roadmap for organizations to act.

¹ The burden of mental disorders across the states of India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2017 - PubMed

² Mental health and well-being in the workplace | Deloitte Global

³ The McKinsey Health Institute conducted an analysis estimating the total potential economic value of investing in employee health and well-being in India.

Why This Matters

80%

of **employees in India** reported **at least 1 adverse mental health symptom**, directly impacting productivity and attrition (Deloitte India's 2022 report⁴).

42%

of **corporate employees in India** report experiencing symptoms of **anxiety or depression** (Mpower Minds, 2023⁵).

71%

of **Indian Gen Z professionals** **prioritize mental health resources** when evaluating potential employers (LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends survey, 2022⁶).

39%

of **Gen Zs and 34% of Millennials** report taking **time off work due to stress or anxiety**, but many cited stigma and fear of negative consequences as barriers to disclosure (Deloitte, 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Study⁷).

⁴ Mental health and well-being in the workplace | Deloitte Global

⁵ Mpower - Mental Health And Wellness Quotient At The Workplace

⁶ Gen Z's Impact On Workplace Norms: Priority On Mental Health, Flexible Hours And Green Practices

⁷ <https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-shared/docs/campaigns/2025/2025-genz-millennial-survey.pdf>

What Leaders Can Do

01

Establish a Data-Driven Foundation

Use surveys, focus groups, and performance data to pinpoint the real mental health needs and costs in your organization.

02

Integrate Holistic Mental Health Practices

Build an integrated support system beyond EAPs, linking self help tools, therapists, psychiatrists, coaches, medical professionals, etc.

03

Model Leadership Accountability

Embed mental health outcomes in organization policies, assign ownership at the leadership level, and regularly review progress to guide future action.

04

Nurture Resilience and Adaptability

Address workload and policy stressors while building company-wide resilience and stress management skills.

05

Build a Culture of Care

Role-model openness, equip managers to spot signs of stress and burnout, build peer networks, and make mental health part of team conversations.



Leaders who act now can build more resilient, innovative, and engaged organizations. This escalates the urgency, and conveys a realistic picture.

Understanding Workplace Mental Health

In a 2022 study, Deloitte India estimated that poor employee mental health costs Indian companies **₹1.1 lakh** crore annually in absenteeism, presenteeism, and attrition. Anxiety, depression, and chronic stress affect a significant portion of the workforce, often silently.⁸

The ripple effects of poor mental health extend from individual organizations to the nation as a whole. According to the **World Health Organization**, mental health conditions could cost the Indian economy **\$1.03 trillion between 2012 and 2030** due to productivity loss, chronic illness, and early mortality.¹⁰

A 2023 Mpower Minds survey

covering 3,000 employees across eight cities and ten industries, revealed that 42% experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression.

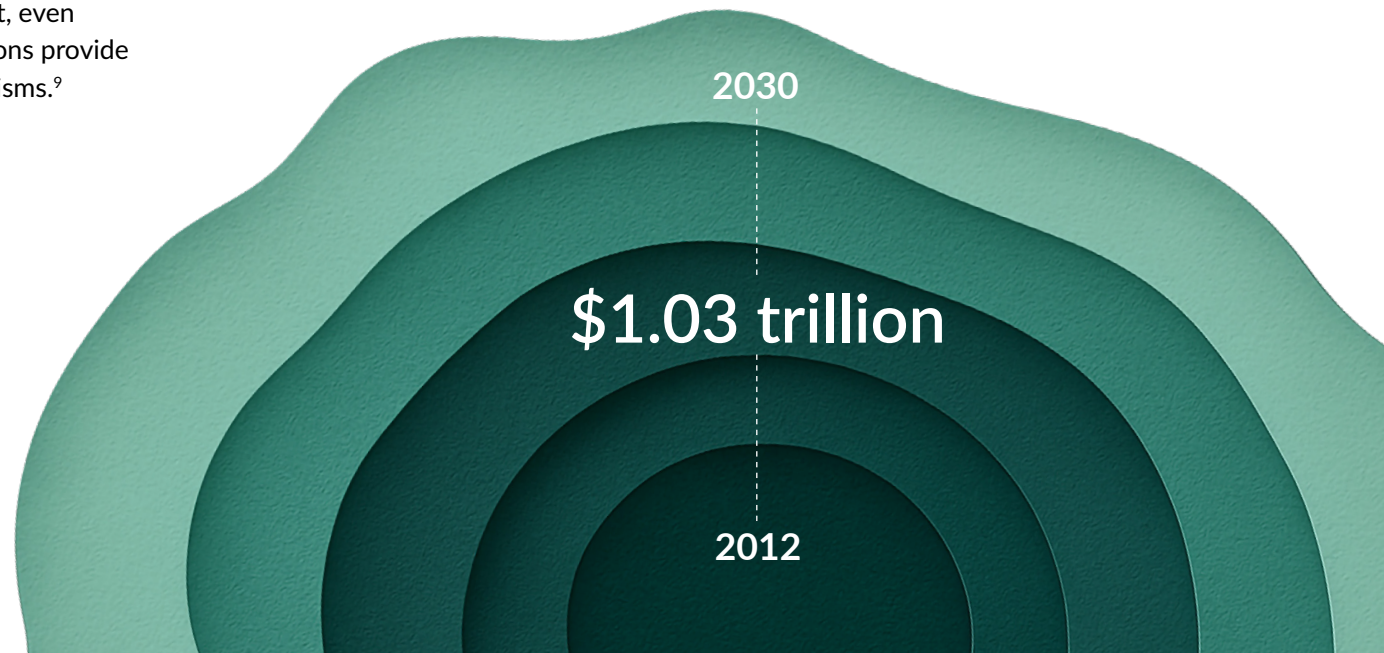
A 2024 Great Place To Work (India) survey

of more than 18.5 lakh employees from over 210 companies across 18 industries showed that 1 in 4 employees feel unable to speak openly about stress or burnout, even when organizations provide support mechanisms.⁹

⁸ [Mental health and well-being in the workplace | Deloitte Global](#)

⁹ [A quarter of all employees struggle to voice mental health issues at workplace : Survey - The Economic Times](#)

¹⁰ [Mental health - India](#)



A.

How COVID Reshaped Mental Health Priorities in Indian Workplaces

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in how Indian workplaces perceive and prioritize mental health. What was once a peripheral concern gained center stage as organizations dealt with rising levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. The shift to remote and hybrid work models disrupted traditional support systems and heightened feelings of isolation.

**The numbers send a clear message:
Workplaces must move beyond short-term fixes and invest in sustainable mental health strategies that build trust and long-term well-being.**

¹¹ [46% of workforce in firms in India suffer from some or the other form of stress: Data - The Economic Times](#)

¹² [The burden of mental disorders across the states of India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2017 | Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation](#)

Pre Pandemic

46% of Indian employees

Before the pandemic, mental health concerns were already present but underreported. For instance, a 2016 study by EAP provider Optum, found that 46% of Indian employees experienced stress-related issues, yet few companies recognized it as a business risk¹¹.

Post Pandemic

59% of Indian employees

The McKinsey Health Institute's 2023 survey "Reframing employee health: Moving beyond burnout to holistic health" reported 59% of Indian employees experiencing burnout symptoms - one of the highest rates globally. By comparison, the global average is approximately 22%.

47% of employees

In contrast, post-pandemic data reveals a stark escalation. Deloitte India's 2022 report revealed 80% of employees experience mental health challenges, and 47% of employees attributed it directly to workplace stress, with millennials and Gen Z reporting the highest levels. In smaller organizations (with fewer than 500 employees), only 38% of respondents were aware of workplace mental-health resources, indicating significant communication and awareness gaps.¹²



“Post the pandemic, the corporate world has understood the magnitude of mental health issues. The root cause of attrition is stress. We need to see how we can address the stressful environment that people operate in.”

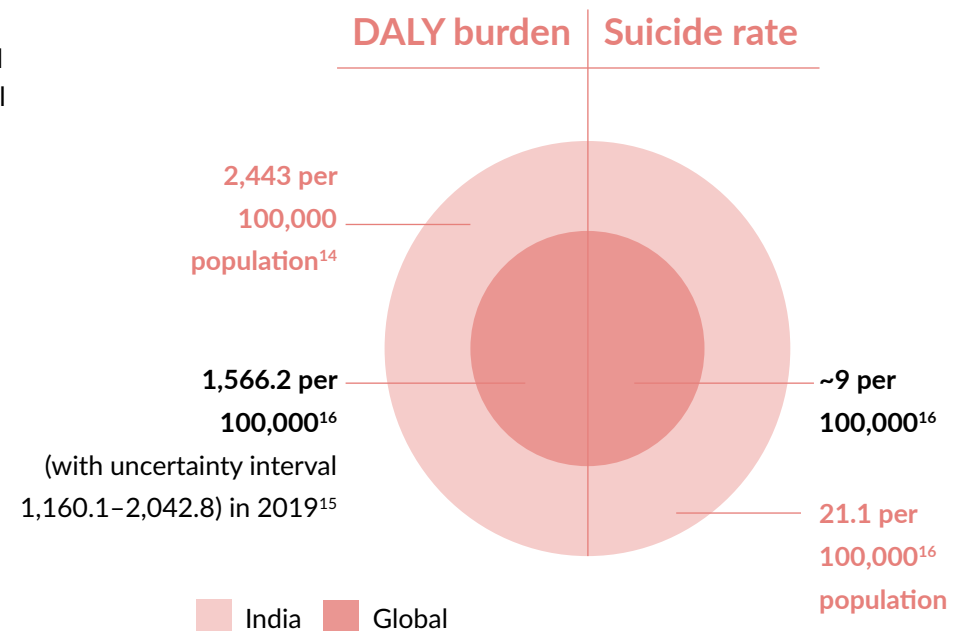
Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw
Chairperson, Biocon Group

At **Biocon**, employee mental well-being has been positioned as a core component of organizational health and safety. The company has introduced confidential counseling services, wellness sessions across campuses, and resilience-focused workshops tailored to both corporate and manufacturing teams. Biocon’s HR and leadership teams have emphasized consistent internal communication and manager sensitization to foster a culture where employees feel safe to speak up about stress or emotional distress. These efforts reflect a growing commitment to embed mental wellness into the company’s operational fabric, not just as a reactive tool, but as a proactive investment in workforce stability and innovation.

B.

Economic Impact of Mental Health: Burnout, Attrition, and Productivity Loss

India carries a significant mental health burden compared to many other countries. Although it accounts for ~18% of the global population, Global Burden of Disease (GBD) 2013¹² Data shows that around a third of global Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY) **attributable to mental, neurological, and substance use disorders were found in China and India (66 million DALYs), a number greater than all developed countries combined (50 million DALYs)**¹³.

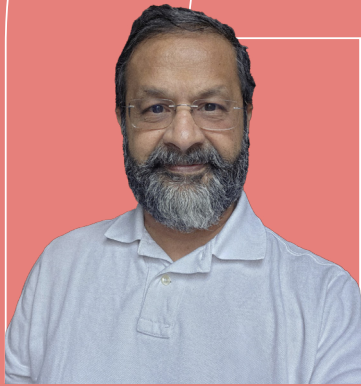


¹³ [The burden of mental, neurological, and substance use disorders in China and India: a systematic analysis of community representative epidemiological studies - PubMed](#)

¹⁴ [Mental health - India](#)

¹⁵ [Global, regional, and national burden of 12 mental disorders in 204 countries and territories, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 - The Lancet Psychiatry](#)

¹⁶ [Suicide rates](#)



“For businesses to thrive in the modern era, investing in mental health as a strategic priority is not just a moral imperative, but a fundamental business necessity. It’s about building resilient, engaged, and high-performing workforces that can navigate the complexities of today’s world.”

Sajit T.C.

Ex. CHRO- Bangalore International Airport Limited & Board Director - Kempegowda International Airport Foundation

At **Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL)**, mental health has been integrated into a broader wellness strategy aimed at supporting employees across operational roles. Post-pandemic, the company introduced onsite counselors, monthly wellness themes, and regular leadership messaging to reduce stigma and build awareness. Efforts were tailored for diverse employee groups, from shift workers to frontline teams, through differentiated sessions and quiet zones for reflection. These actions reflect BIAL’s belief that well-being is not just about support services, but about enabling performance and resilience in a high-intensity work environment.

While estimates vary by methodology and underreporting, the scale of the impact is clear:

USD 5 TRILLION

A **Lancet 2022 study**¹⁷ estimated the global economic burden of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and other MNS disorders at about **USD 5 trillion**. For **South Asia**, the losses were estimated at **5% of GDP**.

USD 1.03 TRILLION

WHO projected impact on India is even more staggering: **mental health conditions are expected to drain around USD 1.03 trillion from the economy between 2012 and 2030**, primarily through lost productivity, chronic illness, and premature deaths.¹²

~USD 14 BILLION

The **Deloitte India 2022** report estimated that Indian employers lose **₹1.1 lakh crore (~USD 14 billion) annually** due to absenteeism, presenteeism, and attrition tied to poor mental health.⁹

USD 350 BILLION

In 2024, **The McKinsey Health Institute** estimated that the economic opportunity from improved employee health and well-being in India's formal employment sector is about **USD 350 billion annually, which works out to up to 8% of GDP**.³

While The McKinsey Health Institute estimates the opportunity could be as high as 8% of GDP³, other studies place the range between 2–5%. This variance highlights differences in methodology and the need for more context-sensitive measurement tools.

The McKinsey Health Institute breaks down the overall economic opportunity of investing in employee well-being using six key workplace levers:

Attrition	Absenteeism	Presenteeism
Productivity	Retention	Attraction

Of these, **absenteeism and attrition estimates are based on mental health-specific ratios**, while metrics for presenteeism, productivity, retention, and attraction are derived from broader well-being indicators, adjusted using available workforce studies.

The remaining categories of **presenteeism, productivity, retention, and attraction** are estimated using broader indicators of employee well-being (such as job satisfaction, burnout risk, and intent to stay) rather than directly measured mental health conditions. These estimates offer directional insights into how poor mental health impacts business outcomes.

¹⁷ [Quantifying the global burden of mental disorders and their economic value - eClinicalMedicine](#)

For India, these six workplace levers break down as follows:¹⁸

1

Attrition: Estimated USD 12–14 billion annually from employee turnover due to mental health concerns.

2

Absenteeism: Around USD 8.5 billion annually from the share of illness-related absence due to mental health issues.

3

Presenteeism: Up to USD 158 billion annually from productive days lost annually, as employees go to work or remain at work when ill to show that they are hard workers.

4

Productivity Gains: Estimated at USD ~21–151 billion annually, driven by increased efficiency, creativity, and innovation resulting from improved mental health.

5

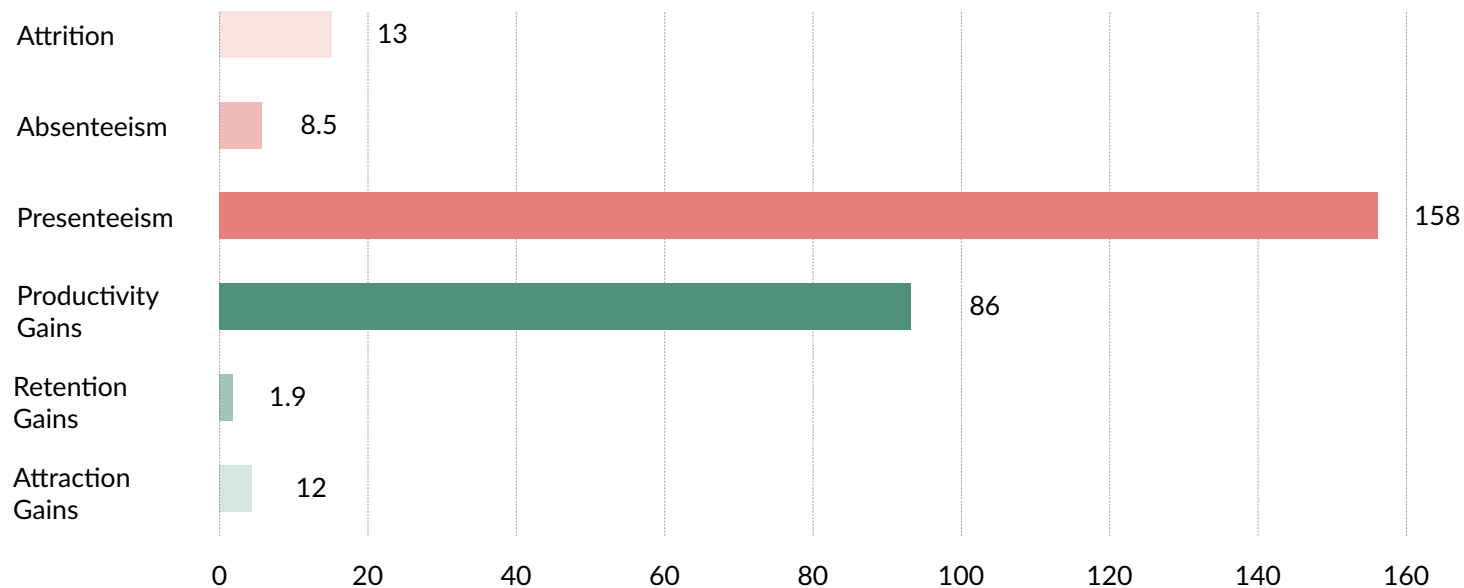
Retention Gains: Estimated at USD 1.9 billion annually, through reduced employee turnover resulting from supportive well-being practices.

6

Attraction Gains: Estimated at USD 12 billion annually, based on the ability of mentally healthy workplace cultures to attract top talent.

¹⁸ The analysis used a mix of India-specific assumptions from Government Data (e.g., [Download Reports | Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation | Government Of India: Indian Labour Bureau 2021](#); [India Employment Report 2024](#); etc.) where available, and global research benchmarks (e.g., [The price of productivity loss | Enhesa](#), [Presenteeism: An overview - OSHwiki | European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#)), where not. Wherever data allowed, the estimates were adjusted to reflect the specific share of absenteeism or attrition caused by mental health issues, rather than overall health factors.

Breakdown of Economic Impact from Mental Health at Work (India)



[Note: The McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) contributed to this report by developing the economic analysis estimating the potential economic value of investing in employee health and well-being in India, using its global economic value framework. Absenteeism and attrition estimates were based on mental health-specific ratios, while metrics for presenteeism, productivity, retention, and attraction were derived from broader well-being indicators, adjusted using available workforce studies. The \$86 billion figure represents the midpoint of the estimated range of productivity gains (\$21–151 billion), calculated as the average of the lower and upper bounds.]

While presenteeism is often cited as a major cost driver in workplace mental health economics, estimates vary widely and remain contested.

The McKinsey Health Institute estimates **presenteeism** to be associated with USD 158 billion in potential opportunity.³

OSHA-EU¹⁹ notes that calculating precise costs is challenging; in some cases, being present at work, even while struggling, can be stabilizing and more beneficial than full absence.

These nuances highlight the need for caution in interpreting presenteeism estimates.

¹⁹[Presenteeism: An overview - OSHwiki | European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#)

Finding Stability: My Journey Through Fear, Fatigue, and Freedom

For years, I tried to be everything to everyone: the dependable HR professional, the single mother, the dutiful daughter. I was performing life, not living it. I called in sick not for visible illness, but for the invisible wounds that refused to heal.

The turning point came when my two-year-old daughter fell severely ill. I realized I was living on autopilot, mistaking survival for stability. That's when I turned to therapy, something I had often recommended to others at work but never sought for myself.

As someone in HR, I was supposed to be the advocate for employee well-being. Yet there I was, broken in ways no policy could fix. I began to see how much of my instability

came from chasing definitions of success set by others. Slowly, I learned to respond instead of react, to pause before breaking. It didn't fix everything overnight, but it brought me back to myself, grounded, aware, and human again.

Through this journey, I realized that workplace mental health is deeply personal. It isn't just about flexible hours or leave policies; it's about cultures where people can admit they're struggling without fear. It's about leaders who see well-being as part of performance, not outside it. Compassion at work, I've learned, isn't a luxury. It's a necessity.

Today, I still juggle many roles, HR professional, mother, daughter, friend, but I don't chase balance anymore. I create it in small, mindful moments. Stability, I've learned, isn't a job title or paycheck. It's the quiet confidence that even when life burns down, you can rebuild, stronger and more whole than before.



Amritha Menon

Director, People & Culture, Myridius

A review published in the Journal of Mental Health Issues and Behaviour found that workplace mental health programs deliver an average **ROI of \$4 per \$1 invested**, by reducing absenteeism, turnover, and improving overall performance (across 100 companies studied in OECD countries).²¹



At the same time, evidence strongly supports the return on investment from addressing mental health issues:

A Deloitte UK meta-analysis found a **USD 4–6 return** for every dollar invested in workplace mental health initiatives.²⁰

As mentioned earlier, **The McKinsey Health Institute's** analysis outlines the economic opportunity at stake (USD 350 billion)³ in India for employers by investing in their employees' health and wellbeing.

Together, these findings make a clear case: while cost estimates differ, the **business and development gains from proactive investment in mental health are consistent and compelling.**

²⁰ Deloitte UK (2022). Mental Health and Employers: The Case for Investment – Pandemic and Beyond. [Mental health and employers - the case for investment | Deloitte UK](#)

²¹ [The Economic Impact of Workplace Mental Health Initiatives: A Comprehensive Analysis of Return on Investment and Organizational](#)

**While USD 350 billion is the economic opportunity for India,
we will be helping 135 Million employees in India²²!**

Living with Bipolar Affective Disorder: A Journey of Acceptance, Support, and Growth

It's been sixteen years since I was diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder, a serious mood disorder characterized by alternating episodes of depression and mania. Living with this condition has shaped both my personal and professional journey.

In the early years of my career, managing my mental health was a challenge. There were times I needed frequent breaks or found it hard to show up fully at work. Instead of concealing my condition, I chose honesty. Being

open about my struggles helped me overcome fear and show up as my authentic self, even during difficult periods.

I've been fortunate to work in environments that valued empathy and compassion. At NITI Aayog, I had access to a mental health counsellor and engaged in regular therapy for six months. That consistent support gave me the tools to better understand my condition, manage my moods, and continue contributing meaningfully at work.

Therapy, openness, and a supportive culture have made all the difference. Living with a mental health condition is not easy, but with the right help and an accepting workplace, it's absolutely possible to live fully and thrive.



Manvi Mehta
Ex-Employee at Niti Aayog

²²International Labour Organization (ILO) India Employment Report 2024

The takeaway for leaders across the C-suite is clear:

Embedding mental health into business strategy builds resilience, drives long-term value, and strengthens an organization's competitive edge.

For CEOs

Investing in mental health isn't just the right thing to do, it can have a real impact on the bottom-line.

For CFOs

Well-being should be embedded into people practices, culture, and performance systems, supported by context-specific measurement tools to track impact.

For CHROs

Whether looking through the lens of financial risk, talent strategy, or cultural resilience, supporting mental health at work is best understood not as a cost, but as a strategic investment in long-term performance.

The potential for transformation is significant. With bold leadership and a roadmap rooted in data and culture, organizations can turn mental health from a source of risk into a driver of competitive advantage, building healthier teams, stronger cultures, and sustainable success.

C.

Insights from The Live Love Laugh Foundation's Pilots and Focus Group Discussions

Through three focus group discussions with 20 HR leaders and four in-depth interviews across startups, mid-sized, and large companies in IT, pharma, healthcare, aviation, and manufacturing, The Live Love Laugh Foundation identified clear patterns and actionable insights into how Indian workplaces approach mental well-being.

Top 3 Insights from FGDs



Leaders value safe spaces to learn from peers navigating similar challenges



EAP Underutilization Low usage due to stigma, awareness, and confidentiality



Risk of Mental Health Being Another HR initiative Need for leadership buy-in

“Burnout today is a silent epidemic. Nearly 59% of India’s workforce reports feeling burnt out , and that number doesn’t just reflect stress, it reflects a system in need of change. At Biocon, we believe that true wellness goes beyond any single intervention. That’s why we’ve anchored our approach around four key pillars: emotional, physical, financial, and social well-being.

A resilient organisation starts with a supported workforce. When our people feel well, they lead well, they work well, and of course, they live well. And they show up with purpose, courage, and interest. That’s the future we are working towards, one conversation, one commitment, one change at a time!”



Maninder Kapoor Puri

Head of Human Resources, Biocon Limited

01 Corporate Readiness to Integrate Mental Health

The integration of mental health in Indian workplaces spans a spectrum: awareness, resourcing, and action. Pilots and focus group discussions by The Live Love Laugh Foundation highlight three organizational archetypes:

1.

Unaware or Skeptical: Companies that do not view investments in mental health as integral to the business. For these organizations, mental health remains peripheral, often overshadowed by immediate operational priorities.

2.

Early Movers: Companies that have begun taking first steps, such as introducing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or running awareness campaigns. However, data on EAP usage shows that adoption remains low, highlighting the need for more intentional design and cultural integration. For these companies, the next frontier is clear: mental health must move beyond standalone services to become part of organizational culture, directly tied to business priorities like performance, engagement, and retention.

3.

Interested but Under-Resourced:

Companies that acknowledge mental health as a priority but lack clarity on how to act, whether in selecting credible service providers, building internal capability, or linking initiatives to business outcomes. Gaps in awareness of evidence-based practices, shortage of trained professionals, and limited budgets for well-being programs hinder progress and explain why many organizations remain stuck in the “acknowledgement-action gap” - a discrepancy between recognizing a need and actually taking steps to address it, is a recurring theme across workplaces.

One key finding: most organizations are still in the early stages of their mental health journey, and leaders are actively seeking external or industry-level peer forums to share learnings, strategies, and roadmaps for implementation. However, while mental health is acknowledged symbolically (through Town Halls or annual World Mental Health Day events, it rarely becomes a regular, integrated part of organizational culture).

This gap is echoed by industry data:
Although more than

80%

of Indian companies recognise that mental health impacts business outcomes²³, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) employ over 111 million people, only

9%

offer structured wellness programs²⁴, highlighting the recurring “acknowledgement-action” gap.

²³ 82% Companies In India Agree That Employees' Mental Health Impacts Their Business. Reveals Study

²⁴ CII Report 2025 | MediBuddy

“At ICICI Prudential Life, employee well-being and mental health are not just HR initiatives, they are strategic imperatives that impact the organisation’s long-term success. In an era marked by rapid disruption and change, we aspire to create a workplace where every individual feels supported, valued, and equipped to thrive with changing times.

Our people philosophy rests on three cornerstones, providing a supportive environment, opportunities for learning and growth, and fairness and meritocracy. Together, these create a culture where employees can bring their whole selves to work, balance personal and professional aspirations, and build resilience to adapt and succeed.

Well-being is not a ‘nice-to-have’; it is foundational to performance, trust, and sustainability. When organisations integrate well-being into the design of work and leadership, they not only have happier and more productive employees but also build stronger culture and enduring institutions.”



Judhajit Das
Chief – Human Resources,
ICICI Prudential Life
Insurance Company Ltd.

02 Poor Utilisation of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

The Live Love Laugh Foundation’s programmatic insights, reinforced by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with HR leaders across sectors, indicate that most companies in the third category (Early Movers) have partnered with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers. EAPs provide confidential, employer-sponsored services that offer free counseling, resources, and support for employees dealing with a range of personal and work-related issues, including mental health concerns like stress, anxiety, burnout and depression.

While awareness sessions and EAPs are useful entry points, they often lack enduring impact. **EAP utilization in India remained low, typically between 3–4%²⁵**. Employees often hesitate to access these services due to stigma around seeking mental health support, concerns about confidentiality, and fear that using the service could lead to negative perceptions or potential repercussions in the workplace. Additionally, limited awareness of the full range of EAP services and doubts about the relevance or quality of support can further reduce engagement, highlighting the need for more culturally sensitive, trusted, and well-integrated mental health initiatives.

Globally, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) utilization rates remain modest, typically between 3–5%, with well-implemented programs reaching 7–10% engagement. In North America, rates average around 9%. Research suggests that organizations with stronger leadership modeling, open communication, and trust-based cultures tend to see higher engagement.²⁶

²⁵ Based on the insights gathered from the pilots and focus group discussions with industry leaders conducted by The Live Love Laugh Foundation.

²⁶ [Assessing the Effectiveness of EAPs in the Workplace | EAPA-SA](#)

Sustained impact requires strategic investment, leadership accountability, and systemic alignment ranging from policy changes to performance metrics.

Often personal experiences fuel this action.

Resilience and Support: Finding Strength in Asking for Help

My journey with mental well-being and resilience has been deeply personal. Eight years ago, my elder daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, and overnight, life turned upside down - routines, meals, and sleep all changed. Our days revolved around blood sugar checks, insulin doses, and constant vigilance. Those moments tested every limit of patience and hope. I believed strength meant holding it all together, but over time, I learned that true strength lies in accepting you can't always do it alone and that reaching out for help is an act of courage. During that time, I was fortunate to have leaders and colleagues who showed deep empathy. My workplace gave me the space to focus on family

and I took on reduced accountability, accessed our Employee Assistance Program, and felt supported at every step. That experience showed me how powerfully organizations can help people rebuild and heal through life's toughest moments.

This realization now drives my passion for mental well-being at Syngene - to make it okay for people to say, "I'm not okay," and to know that support is not just available but encouraged.

Over the past year, my colleague Amogha (a clinical psychologist) and I have initiated manager sensitization sessions, leadership storytelling, and wellbeing campaigns under Thrive360. Seeing counselling utilisation rise from 1% to 22.5% has been deeply rewarding, not for the number itself, but for what it represents: more people choosing to reach out rather than hold it all in.

Resilience, I've learned, isn't about facing hard times alone, it's about finding the courage to ask for help and walking through them together.



Karthik Sekar

Global Head of Employee Experience, Culture, and Workplace Operations, Syngene International Limited

03 Importance of Leadership buy-in

Observations from The Live Love Laugh Foundation's pilot programs show that mental health programs are most effective when senior leadership is consistently involved and reinforces the agenda. For CEOs and CHROs, this underscores the importance of sustained visibility and alignment at the top to embed well-being into organizational culture and priorities. **When C-suite leaders actively champion these efforts, HR teams are better positioned to elevate mental health from a wellness initiative to a core part of strategic conversations.**



“A return on an investment in mental health is a metric worth introducing. Lots of studies say that 20–30% productivity goes away in organisations with mental health issues. It makes financial sense to look at it through the lens of empathy. As far as investors and startups are concerned, painting the picture of productivity and improvement is important because resilience and agility, both critical in dynamic markets, can only thrive in workplaces that support mental well-being. Business strategy and human wellness are deeply interconnected in building enduring organizations.”

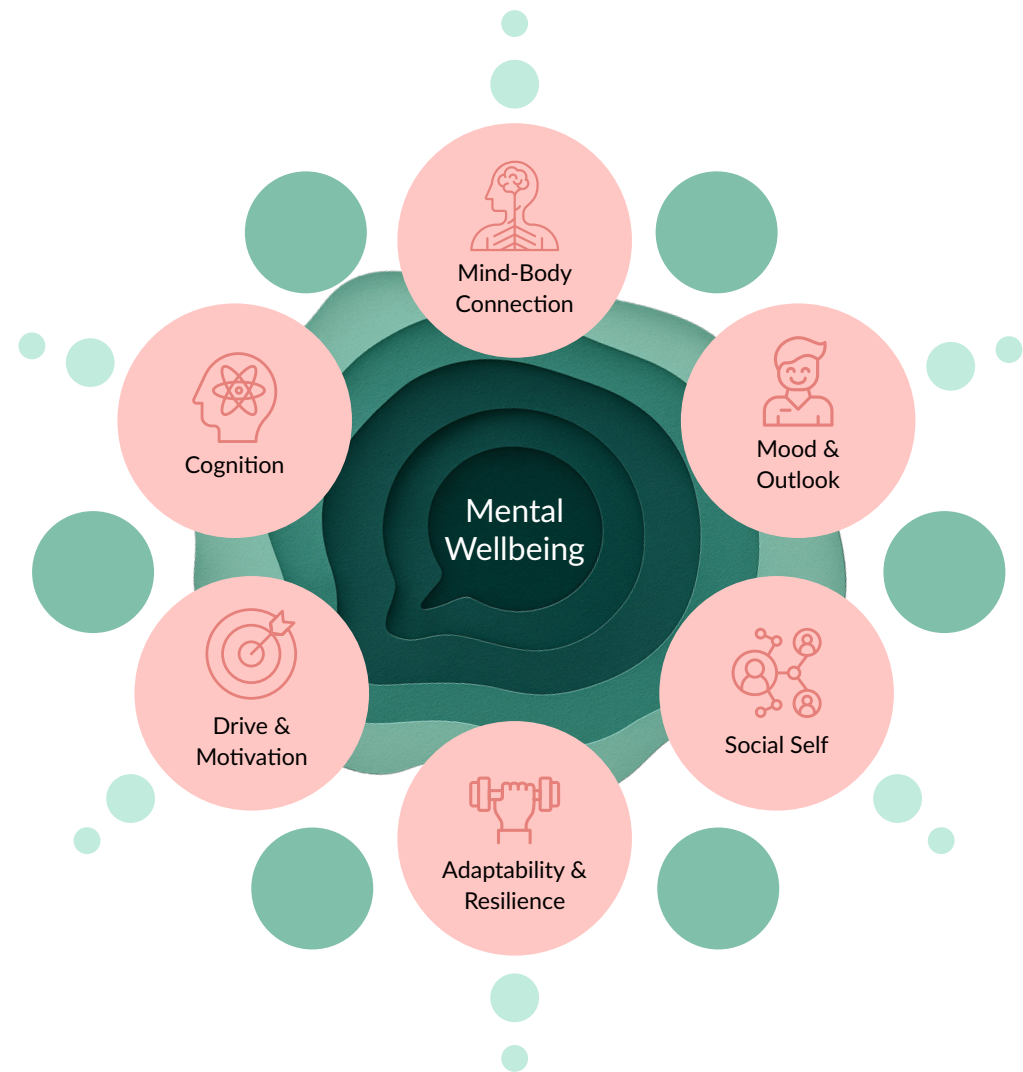
Ananth Narayanan

Founder & CEO of BRND.ME.
(Formally Mensa Brands)

An Integrated Roadmap To Workplace Mental Well-being

The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16 by NIMHANS reveals that nearly 15% of Indian adults (those above 18 years) are in need of active interventions for one or more mental health issues²⁷ These findings are not just a public health concern, they represent a direct business challenge. For companies, it means a significant share of their workforce is at risk of disengagement and productivity loss. To move from acknowledgment to action, organizations need a clear, phased roadmap that embeds mental health into strategy, operations, and culture.

The **Economic Survey of India 2022-23** also recognized mental health as critical to labor productivity and recommended to **Improve Workplace Mental Health Policies** by addressing job stress, long working hours, and burnout.²⁸



²⁷[National Mental Health Survey of India 2015-2016 - PMC](#)

²⁸[Economic Survey of India \(2022-23\), Ministry of Finance, Government of India: Advancing Mental Healthcare in India.](#)

While many organisations are beginning to support mental wellness in India, the next step is to intentionally connect these efforts with business priorities, organizational culture, and the lived experience of employees. **Mental health should be integrated into how an organisation leads, supports, and grows its people.**

In India, emotional distress is often experienced and expressed through the body or soma (Grover and Ghosh, 2014²⁹; Gautam & Kapur, 2010³⁰; and others³¹.), manifesting as fatigue, headaches, sleep issues, or chronic pain. This **somatic expression** is not just a symptom, but a culturally-shaped nuance of how we express distress. Understanding how mental health challenges are expressed, such as through physical (somatic) complaints or disengagement from work, enables organizations to identify where the gaps are and how to address them.

As such, this often leads individuals to seek support from general physicians first, rather than mental health professionals. This underscores the need for **mind-body integration and a holistic approach to care**, not only for accurate identification of mental health needs but also to ensure that interventions are contextually sensitive and effective and that employees whose symptoms do not fit into conventional or mental health narratives from the West, can get the support they need early on.

²⁹ [Somatic symptom and related disorders in Asians and Asian Americans - PubMed](#)

³⁰ [Indian culture and psychiatry - PMC](#)

³¹ [JPS multicentric study: Functional somatic symptoms in depression - PMC](#)



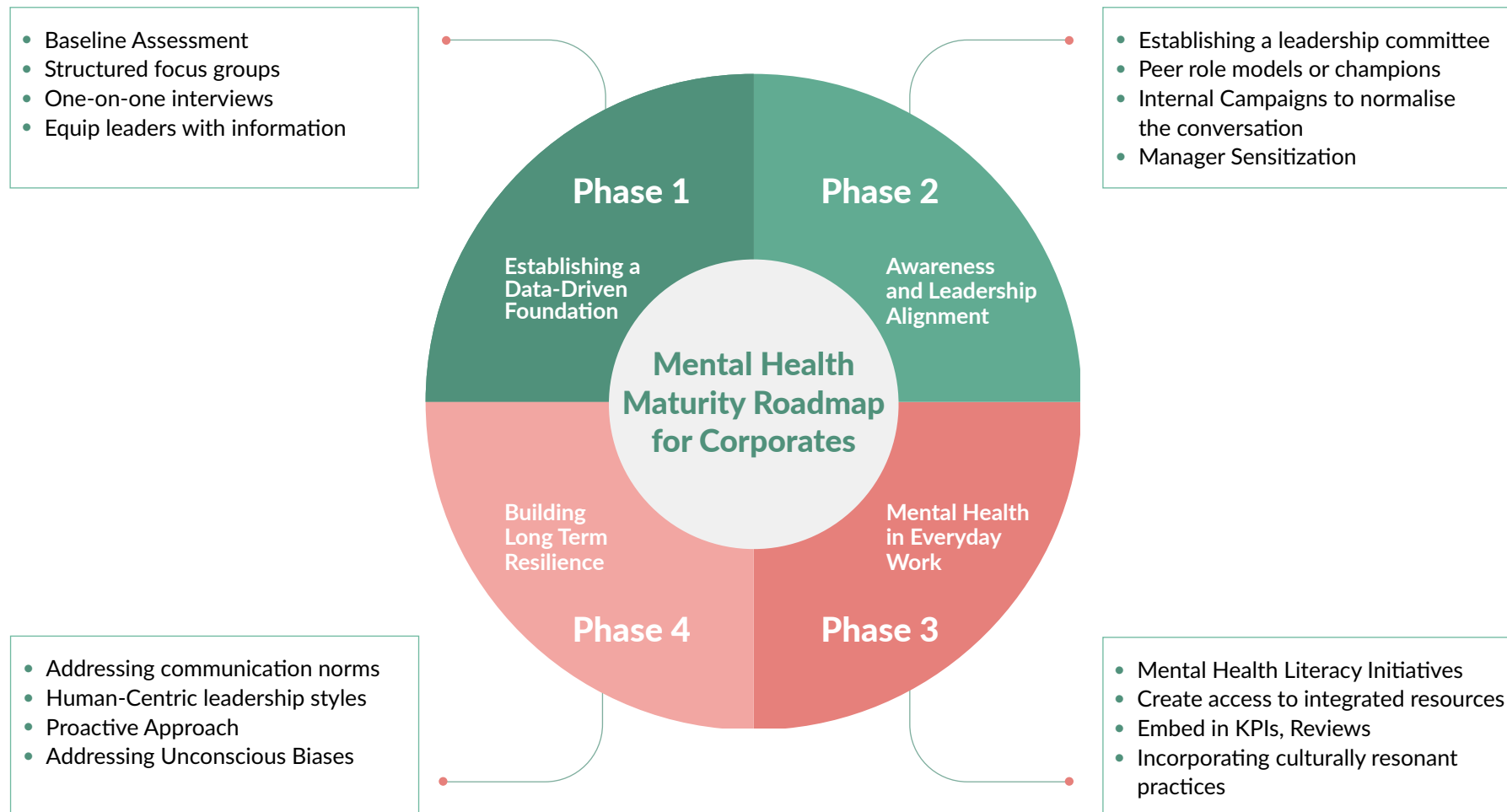
Dr. Shyam Bhat

Chairperson | The Live Love Laugh Foundation
highlights this issue:

“In India, emotional distress often manifests somatically, through fatigue, headaches, pain, or sleep disturbances. To address this effectively, we must integrate the traditionally siloed domains of physical and mental healthcare. Mind-body integration enables earlier recognition of distress and leads to more holistic, culturally congruent, and effective outcomes.”

For Indian workplaces, a context-specific, expert-guided roadmap is essential. The following four phases outline a practical pathway for progress, regardless of the starting point:

Integrated Roadmap to Workplace Well-being



Phase 1:

Assessment - Establishing a Data-Driven Foundation

For any meaningful mental health strategy to take root within an organisation, it must begin with an assessment phase. This initial step serves as the diagnostic backbone of a broader mental wellness roadmap, offering clarity on the organisation's current mental health maturity, employee sentiment, and readiness for change.

A **baseline assessment** enables an understanding not only of the prevalence of stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue, but also less-visible factors such as cultural attitudes toward mental health, barriers that inhibit help-seeking, attrition and absenteeism rates, and more. Tools such as anonymous surveys, structured focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with a cross-section of employees can help capture these insights. The goal here is to move beyond assumptions, and toward actionable data that is aligned with employee wellness needs.

This phase signals to employees that their experiences matter, and that mental health is not being addressed through a one-size-fits-all solution.

At Probe42, mental health awareness and support are an integral part of how we care for our people. We have partnered with a counselling organisation to provide mental health support not just for our employees but also for their families and even extended families. Unlimited one-on-one counselling sessions are offered at no cost to the employee - removing the worry of affordability, as we understand that access to quality counselling can still be expensive and difficult for many. Additionally, we have collaborated with The Live Love Laugh Foundation to conduct a workplace well-being survey to understand how our employees truly feel about their work environment. If the survey reveals areas that need attention or change, we are open as a company to listen, act, and make corrections - because above all, we want every person to feel safe and valued at Probe42.

“A toxic environment slowly breaks a person’s confidence. When someone feels truly safe and unthreatened, they contribute more than they expect - bringing more energy, ideas, and involvement. This not only improves productivity but also builds trust, collaboration, and long-term commitment.”



Sowmya Devaiah
Senior Vice President,
People Practices at
Probe42

Assessments equip leadership and create the building blocks for understanding both the strengths and gaps in workplace culture, ensuring that interventions are grounded in evidence and truly responsive to employee needs.

Phase 2:

Awareness and Leadership Alignment – Building A Culture Of Care

Once assessment results are in, the next step is to build awareness across the organisation and align leadership around a shared commitment to mental well-being. Raising awareness can help **normalise conversations** about mental health and reduce the stigma that often keeps employees from seeking help. Educational initiatives, storytelling, peer role models or champions, personal anecdotes from leaders, and internal campaigns serve to humanise mental health concerns and demystify what mental wellness means in a work context. This is especially important in high performing environments, where employees may conflate resilience with suppression of vulnerability.



Dr. Divya Kannan

Clinical Psychologist,
highlights this issue:

“Many high achievers assume that resilience is an inherent trait they must naturally have at all times. This belief can lead them to neglect their mental health, assuming they can ‘push through’ as they have done before. This underscores the need for more open dialogue and early education. A leadership-backed committee with mental health clinicians at the table, and managers who can notice early signs of stress can really move the needle from awareness to practice.”

Building awareness alone is insufficient without leadership alignment. Senior leaders must be visible champions of well-being and establishing a **leadership committee** under CEO sponsorship, with **ongoing clinical guidance** from mental health experts, can be an effective way to drive accountability around awareness. **Manager training can enable leadership to recognize early signals of stress, anxiety, and burnout in themselves and others to help build a community of care.**

“Mental well-being focuses too much on supporting the individual, while neglecting the collective and the environment. If there was one foundational intervention to make real progress, we would urge organisations to focus on building community-level support for wellbeing. This is more aligned with our cultural and social ethos, and certainly more sustainable in the long term.”



Dr. Ashwin Naik,
Co-Founder and CEO
at Manah Wellness

A 2024 BioMed Central's (BMC) Public Health study³² based on fifteen semi-structured interviews with HR professionals, counselors, and employees highlighted that low self-efficacy and stigma significantly inhibit help-seeking: employees often question their own need ('internalised stigma') or fear job consequences, leading many to avoid disclosing mental health concerns even when support is available. "Psychological safety" and "organizational trust" were identified as key enablers for speaking up and accessing help.

32 Detection and disclosure of workplace mental health challenges: an exploratory study from India | Ankur Poddar & Raina Chhajer | BMC Public Health

At Accenture, we believe that, for our people to stay resilient and thrive, feeling supported and cared for is not just a 'good to do' but a 'must do'. For this to happen, mental health must be embedded into the rhythm of work and not treated as a separate initiative, making well-being a shared, everyday responsibility across teams, leaders, and systems. We acknowledge the unique pressures across different roles by providing relevant, role-sensitive resources so our people feel seen, supported, and understood.

To share a few examples:

1. Our '**Purple Corridors**' initiative encourages teams to co-create simple, realistic well-being rituals that are relevant to them like mindful pauses, movement moments and respectful boundaries.
2. The **F.L.O.W.** (For the Love of Well-being) program is a series of intentional micro-pauses built into meetings and routines that have a direct impact on daily well-being and productivity.
3. All our people have access to **AI-based mental wellness apps** that offer personalized support, from guided meditations to mood tracking and mental health tips, anytime, anywhere.
4. Our people and their families have **24*7 access to expert counselling**. Whether it's stress, relationships, parenting, or a safe space to ease the mental load, help is just a call away.
5. Our 24K+ **Mental Health Global Allies network**, which includes our leaders, further reinforces psychological safety and role-models openness.



Lakshmi Chandrasekharan
CHRO, Accenture India

Phase 3:

Embedding Mental Health into Everyday Work

While building leadership alignment and organization-wide awareness is an ongoing effort, the next step is to establish the right resource infrastructure for effective mental health support. Beyond Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), now present in many organizations, leading employers can create an **ecosystem tailored to workforce needs**. Such a system may integrate access to psychotherapists, psychiatrists, coaches, and group facilitators, alongside nutritional coaches, physiotherapists, and physicians. The goal is not only to provide resources but to ensure employees know when and how to access the right support.

Another example of effective resource use is when managers trained in mental health literacy can recognize employees in distress, refer them to appropriate support, and follow established escalation protocols. High-burnout roles may need targeted interventions and life-stage transitions such as caregiving, parenting, or grief, and call for **differentiated support**.

At this stage, it's important that the organization's policies and leadership practices actively reflect a commitment to well-being. This means ensuring that mental health is thoughtfully built into how the company operates, whether through mental health leave, flexible work options, or supportive plans for employees returning from time away due to illness. Incorporating **culturally resonant practices** like yoga, pranayama, and mindfulness creates greater accessibility and uptake of mental health resources. These resources offer not just stress relief, but connection with self-awareness and emotional regulation, all important skills for emotional intelligence at the workplace.

“Mental health interventions in India cannot be based on imported templates alone. We must integrate healing practices that resonate with our cultural ethos, such as community support, traditional wisdom, yoga, meditation, and a worldview that is less hyper-individualized. For workplaces to be mentally healthy and resilient, organizations must champion approaches that reflect the lived realities and cultural nuances of the Indian context.”



Dr. Shyam Bhat
Chairperson | The Live Love
Laugh Foundation

A common risk at this stage is the **gap between policy and lived experience**. If there is inconsistency between stated practices and the expectations or behaviours of leadership, it can lead to cynicism among employees. When wellness support is **authentically connected**

to the reality of daily pressures, this builds trust and is not viewed as another box to tick. The success of this phase is based on normalisation of how wellness is viewed in daily work flows. Trust builds when gaps between policy and practice are bridged.

Peer-led support models such as mental health champions and well-being ambassadors have proven highly effective in nurturing trust in the organization's commitment to well-being and increasing employee engagement.

P&G India's "Mental Health First-Aiders"

train employees to spot distress and guide peers to help.

Intel India's "Mental Health Champions"

host listening circles and wellness dialogues during awareness periods.

Infosys

runs a peer-support network called "Samaritans," offering confidential listening and emotional support.

Deloitte India

has rolled out the "Supporting Mental Health at Work" e-learning module across its firms to help leaders identify distress and engage empathetically.

TCS's Cares initiative

enables trained peer counselors to support frontline teams in high-pressure roles.

These examples show that support at all levels of the organization, combined with peer-led initiatives embedded into daily work-life helps reduce stigma, builds a stronger culture of trust, and embeds mental health as a collective priority across the organization, not just within HR".



“We are the sum of all of our wellbeing, both physical and mental wellness. We have seen that when employees are not able to bring their whole self to work, it does not result in the best of solutioning and outcomes for customers. It also has an impact on the culture of the org and what it is like to work in the company. We have seen the spillover effect where whole teams are negatively affected when mental health aspects of team members are not acknowledged or addressed.”

Maya John

Chief People Officer at Verse Innovation

Verse Innovation integrates its mental health strategy through partnerships with mental health services provider, Amaha, and internal HR leadership at Verse. Their model includes customized workshops based on EAP session trends, and a keen focus on HR team well-being as frontline responders. The company addresses complex cases with sensitivity including supporting teams exposed to potentially disturbing content. The organization’s 40-member HR team, led by Maya John, has taken intentional steps to embed mental health support into people policies and manager training, while also pushing for cultural normalization through internal conversations and storytelling.

Phase 4:

Prevention First: Building Long-Term Resilience

In this phase, organizational well-being shifts from serving only as support in times of distress to shaping a culture centered on prevention, adaptability, and resilience. This may involve addressing communication norms and workplace dynamics, and at times re-thinking the unwritten rules that shape the culture of an organisation. When workplace leadership and communication emphasize respect, emotional awareness, openness to differences, and inclusion, teams thrive and perform at their best. **Human-centric leadership styles**, that are rooted in empathy and understanding, help enhance the organisation's overall resilience while regular assessments through pulse surveys, team listening forums, and qualitative feedback loops help sustain organizational health.

"For mental health efforts to truly take root, it's helpful when CEOs and senior leaders champion the work. When it's seen as an organizational priority, not just an HR initiative. It signals deeper commitment and drives meaningful change. Mental health in the workplace is influenced by many factors - biological, social, and environmental. Recognizing this complexity allows organizations to move beyond surface-level solutions toward more sustainable, human-centered approaches."



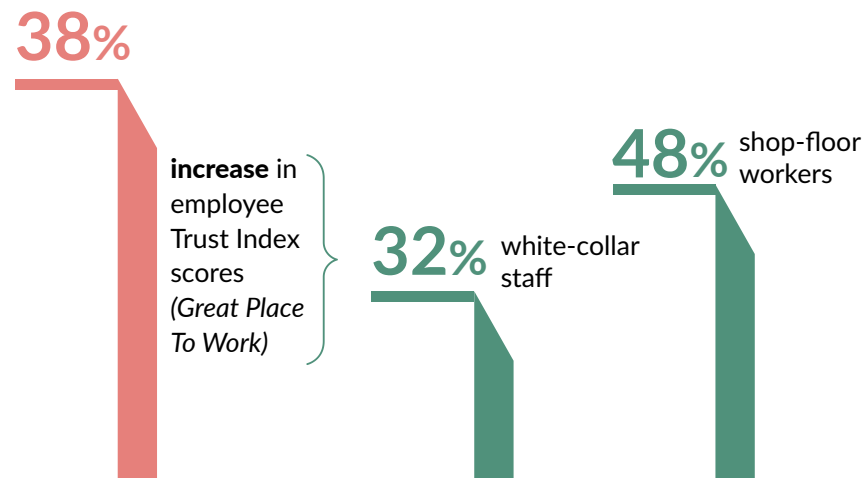
Dr Soumitra Pathare
Psychiatrist and Director,
Centre for Mental Health
Law & Policy

Ultimately, well-being is not seen just as a response to crisis, but as a proactive advantage that continues to evolve as the nuances of the world of work changes.

Bosch India (MICO Bosch) has taken one of the most comprehensive approaches seen across our conversations. Triggered by COVID-19, Bosch hired a full-time Mental Health Evangelist and committed to building a gold-standard mental well-being program by 2025. Their strategy includes annual MIM (Monitoring, Impact, Measurement) cycles, embedded counsellors across organizational levels, and a dedicated internal wellness channel ("BoschTube"). They've also prioritized leadership-led

storytelling through "walkie talkies" and are developing ROI models that quantify outcomes like "days of suffering saved." These efforts reflect a multi-layered approach grounded in cultural change, clinical guidance, and measurable outcomes. Following the 2020 launch of its flagship wellness "befit" program, Bosch India has demonstrated notable outcomes:

Over the last five years,
including the pandemic period,
Bosch's Jaipur plant saw a



Signaling a significant boost in workplace trust and wellbeing.

Attrition dropped to



While these metrics span broader workplace efforts and not just mental health, they strongly indicate that Bosch's cultural and wellness investments including its mental health evangelist, embedded counselors, leadership storytelling, and ROI-driving data practices are translating into **higher trust, lower attrition, and stronger employee engagement.**



For organizations looking to lead in the future of work, mental well-being can no longer remain on the margins. It must be woven into leadership priorities, operational practices, and workplace culture. With the integrated roadmap outlined in this report, companies have a powerful opportunity to create work environments where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to do their best.

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