

Workplace Mental Health

with Keri Riggs, LPC-S



What job(s) did you have before you were a therapist?



What did you learn about the world of work?

Interact professionally with the public / customers

Meeting expectations – being on time

Workplace culture or “politics”

How to get along with co-workers

Communication with managers-need for time off and scheduling

Manage emotions, especially dealing with difficult people

Objectives

- Understand current workplace trends affecting mental health
- Identify common stressors (management, workload, in-office policies)
- Discuss effective strategies to support clients experiencing workplace distress
- Implications for Supervising LPC/LMFT Associates

Disclaimers

Part-time employment with an Employee Assistance Program as an on-site therapist.

No compensation for any portion of this presentation.

AI was used in developing a portion of this content.

2026 Workforce Mental Health Trends Forecast

(Lyra EAP)*

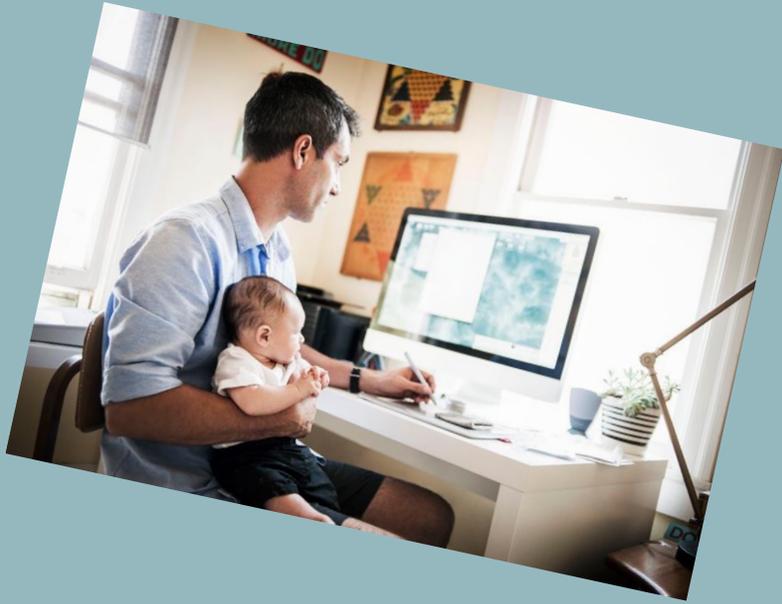
- ❖ Leave of Absence
- ❖ Caregiver Demands
- ❖ Neurodivergence
- ❖ Artificial Intelligence

Leave of Absence

Sixty-five percent (65%) of benefits leaders report drastic increases in disability leaves

Teams are already lean – creates frustration, resentment or guilt

Caregiver Demands



Time and flexibility to take kids to appointments

Lack of Child Specialists

Long Wait Times for Appointments/Testing

Eldercare



Neurodivergence

“For employees who are neurodivergent, such as those with ADHD, autism, or other cognitive differences, a lack of workplace support can mean the difference between showing up and shutting down.

Half report missing work due to insufficient support.

For managers, it’s a matter of confidence and capability—**72%** admit they feel unprepared to lead a neurodiverse team.”

What benefit leaders say is most important to offer

- ✓ 59% Access to neurodivergent-aware or neurodivergent-identified providers
- ✓ 47% Tailored coaching or therapy for neurodivergent employees
- ✓ 44% Skill-building for time management and goal setting
- ✓ 40% Accommodations or tools for focus, sensory needs, or communication preferences
- ✓ 40% Manager training on how to support neurodivergent team members

Let's Talk Accommodations

“All employees can contribute more efficiently and productively by advocating for reasonable adjustments that help us work better,” he says. “By inviting employees to share their needs, managers build trust.”

“This trust can lead to greater employee retention, enhanced productivity, increased morale, and a truly inclusive workplace.”

David Flink, the CEO and co-founder of Eye to Eye, a non-profit organization that works with neurodiverse kids and their schools all across the country.

[Forbes](#), Neurodiversity In The Workplace: Why It's An Asset, Not A Liability
by Mark C. Perna, Contributor Jul 18, 2023

Building a truly inclusive workplace means equipping leaders with the tools to understand neurodiversity, foster empathy, and normalize conversations to reduce stigma. Establishing trauma informed leadership is critical.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR NEURODIVERSE EMPLOYEES: FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE



WORKSPACE ADJUSTMENTS

- Quiet zones/Focus rooms
- Flexible seating options
- Adjustable lighting/Minimize sensory triggers



FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES

- Staggered start/end times
- Remote work opportunities
- Consistent break schedule



COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK

- Provide written instructions
- Meeting agendas in advance
- Direct and clear feedback



SUPPORT & TRAINING

- Neurodiversity awareness training for managers & teams
- Mentorship programs
- Access to job coaches

Artificial Intelligence - Three Core Anxiety Domains

Autonomy & Control

Loss of agency over one's work

Trust & Ethics

Opacity, liability & accountability

Identity & Culture

Role, meaning & competence

But wait, there's more...

under-use of skills or being under-skilled for work;

excessive workloads or work pace, understaffing;

long, unsocial or inflexible hours;

lack of control over job design or workload;

unsafe or poor physical working conditions;

organizational culture that enables negative behaviors;

limited support from colleagues or authoritarian supervision;

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work> Sept, 2024

But wait, there's more...

violence, harassment or bullying;

discrimination and exclusion;

unclear job role;

under- or over-promotion;

job insecurity, inadequate pay, or poor investment in career development;

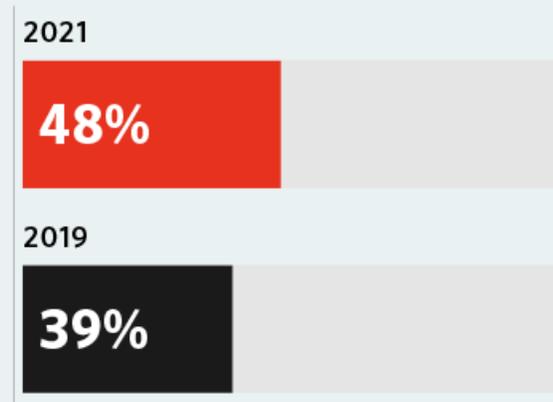
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work> Sept, 2024

Workplace Stressors (APA 2021)

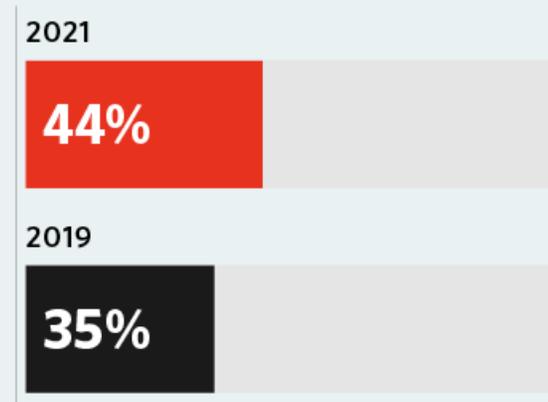
INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION-RELATED FACTORS THAT IMPACT STRESS LEVELS AT WORK

% VERY/SOMEWHAT SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

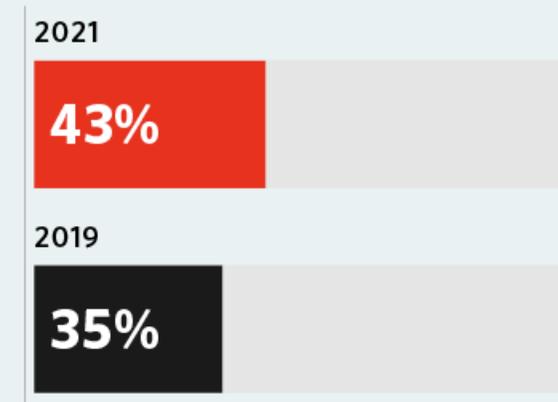
Lack of participation
in decision making



Problems with my supervisor



Problems with my coworkers



Manager Burnout

What benefits leaders say is stressing managers most

- 49% Pressure to meet goals without adequate support
- 49% Emotional toll of supporting struggling team members
- 43% High workload or unrealistic expectations

“The gap is clear: While 93% of managers *already receive resources and training* to support employee mental health, 95% of benefits leaders believe managers would benefit from more.

Companies may see managers as the first line of defense in supporting employee mental health, but *until support catches up to the reality of the role*, managers will remain under-equipped to meet rising expectations.”

But wait, there's more...



- Fear of employer retaliation with a complaint
- Facing confrontation from customers, patients, co-workers, supervisors, or employers
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties.

<https://www.osha.gov/workplace-stress/understanding-the-problem>



Marginalization

A form of discrimination against both older & younger workers, including denial of access to resources, opportunities, spaces, or services



Forced/ encouraged early retirement

According to one study, 56% of workers aged 50 and older have been forced out of their jobs before they were ready to retire

Examples of Ageism in the Workplace



Reduced training opportunities

A lack of L&D opportunities could be due to stereotypes such as the view that older employees may be slow learners & likely to retire soon.



Unequal pay

Salaries could sometimes be based more on seniority than performance

Source: Propublica

Keri's Additions and Observations

- Immigration and Visa Stress
- Adapting to Regional or International Relocation
- Loneliness / Minimal Support Systems
- Team Members Across the Globe
- Generational Differences in Philosophies About Work

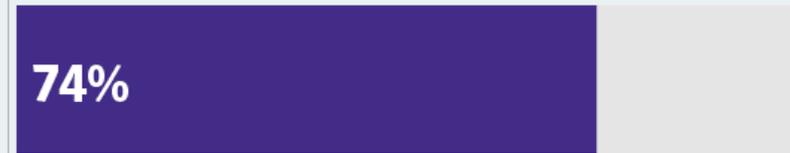


Diversity in Leadership (APA 2021)

AGREE THEIR CURRENT WORKPLACE IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

Have women in senior leadership



Do not have women in senior leadership



Have people of color in senior leadership



Do not have people of color in senior leadership



Family Businesses and Nonprofits

System Dynamics Are at Play



Verbal or Emotional Abuse

Threats, Manipulation and Deceit

Loyalty, Secrecy and Alliances

Narcissism

Substance Use / Dependency

Financial Factors

From OSHA/Department of Labor

More than 85% of employees surveyed in 2021 by the American Psychological Association reported that actions from their employer would help their mental health.

The goal is to find ways to:

- ✓ alleviate or remove stressors in the workplace to the greatest extent possible,
- ✓ build coping and resiliency supports,
- ✓ ensure that people who need help know where to turn

Core EAP Services & Referral Types

Counseling Services (Individual & Couple) – Short-term, solution-focused counseling often included with employer benefits plans.

Work-Life Supports – Referrals for childcare, elder care, financial/legal consultation, and crisis support.

Manager/Leader Consultation – Organizational consulting to help supervisors navigate employee stress and performance issues. Research shows employers increasingly rely on EAPs to address complex employee-supervisor dynamics, not just individual counseling.

Digital, AI & Remote Options – Telephonic, video, and text messaging support; sometimes asynchronous support or coaching for mild stress symptoms.

How Do We Leave Work at Work?



Therapeutic Frameworks and Interventions

A. Assessment & Case Formulation

- Functional analysis of work stressors
- Identifying interaction patterns: individual vulnerabilities × organizational demands

B. Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies

- Cognitive restructuring for maladaptive beliefs (e.g., “I must please everyone”)
- Behavioral experiments to test assumptions and enhance agency

Therapeutic Frameworks and Interventions

C. Stress Management & Resilience Skills

- Mindfulness, relaxation training, stress inoculation
- Sleep, pacing, boundary setting

D. Assertiveness & Communication Skills

- Scripts for difficult conversations with supervisors
- Negotiation strategies for workload and flexibility

Therapeutic Frameworks and Interventions

E. Self-Compassion and Identity Work

- Reducing overidentification with productivity
- Values-based work alignment

F. Systems-Oriented Approaches

- When appropriate, supporting clients to:
 - Advocate for organizational change
 - Leverage HR/EAP resources
 - Consult with workplace clinicians/coaches

Supervising LPC/LMFT Associates

**Your Client is the Expert on their
Workplace Culture**

Their Workplace is a System

**Dynamics and Relationships May
Mirror Family of Origin**



Supervising LPC/LMFT Associates

Hierarchy & Organizational Culture

Therapy training emphasizes flat, collaborative relationships. Most workplaces do not work that way.

Supervisees may struggle to understand why a client can't "just talk to their manager" or "set a boundary with their boss."

Supervisors can help therapists develop a working model of how power flows in organizations — and how much of a client's distress may be structurally constrained, not just interpersonally solvable.

Supervising LPC/LMFT Associates

Workplace Roles & Accountability

Business environments are often explicitly evaluative — performance reviews, KPIs, metrics, rankings.

Clients may internalize these systems deeply, tying their self-worth to measurable output.

Supervisors help therapists recognize when a client's shame or anxiety is being fed by an external measurement system and hold that context rather than moving too quickly to cognitive reframing.

Supervising LPC/LMFT Associates

You don't need to understand business deeply — you need to understand it enough to take your client's world seriously.

The goal is to replace blank incomprehension with informed curiosity, so therapists ask better questions and make fewer accidental minimizations of what clients are living through.

Q & A

Share Your
Experiences
and
Takeaways



Thank you!

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