

5 ways companies can support employee mental health through EAPs

According to [Sapien Labs' fourth annual Mental State of the World Report](#), South Africans are among those struggling the most with mental well-being issues, ranking 69 out of 71 countries, with little improvement post-pandemic.



Gary Feldman, Executive Head of Healthcare Consulting at NMG Benefits

Businesses have a critical role to play in easing the effects of mental health issues through employee assistance programmes (EAPs), by investing in the well-being of their employees, and by offering support, says Gary Feldman, executive head of healthcare consulting for employee benefits firm NMG Benefits.

“Growing numbers of South Africans are feeling overwhelming stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression. This affects their relationships, quality of life, and productivity to the point where they can no longer deliver on the most basic of requests. Even responding to an email can be an anxiety-inducing task,” says Feldman.

The average person spends one-third of their life at work, so understanding employee wellness is crucial. It doesn't just speak to the physical health of employees, but also their emotional and mental well-being, and even their financial and legal stability. Employees who are happy and healthy are more resilient and can manage change better.

Research suggests workplace initiatives designed to promote good mental health among employees can provide companies

with a measurable return on their investment. According to the World Health Organization, companies can see a \$4 return on every \$1 they put towards treating common mental health concerns.



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South African employers who take a proactive and flexible approach to supporting their people are seeing real improvements in productivity. There is a clear correlation between having effective employee assistance and absenteeism management programmes in place, and improved productivity.

Some of the ways in which EAPs can help companies to manage their employees' mental wellness include:

Counselling: Confidential counselling services help employees to address personal and work-related issues that are affecting their mental and emotional health. These services are typically offered by licensed external mental health professionals.

Stress management: EAPs often provide stress management resources to help employees manage their deadlines and challenges, and promote overall wellness. These services may include workshops, stress management tools, counselling specifically around stress management, and online resources.



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Financial and legal support: Financial struggles are one of the biggest sources of stress in the workplace. EAPs often give employees access to legal and financial advice in order to better manage their financial and legal well-being, both in their personal life and at work. This includes advice on estate planning, debt counselling, and even assisting with divorce proceedings.

Workplace support: A healthy work environment promotes mental well-being. Workplace support can include providing training and resources to help managers identify and address potential issues in the workplace. EAPs can also support employee well-being through flexible working arrangements, and peer support initiatives.

Empathy: Cultivating an environment focused on empathy is key to harnessing the power of productivity. Organisational success relies on a compassionate and inclusive culture.

"EAPs play a critical role in addressing mental health issues in the workplace by providing support to employees and reducing the stigma around mental health. Employers who invest in their employees in this way can maintain overall well-being in the workplace. This increases productivity, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and overall performance," says Feldman.