



2024 Healthcare Trends and Insights



Executive Letter



MITCHELL BEST

Chief Executive Officer

The escalating professional burnout and systemic challenges within healthcare today, which had been steadily intensifying, have now reached a critical point of overflow. There is big and serious work to do. As stressors mount and organizational and cultural tensions rise, we must recognize the human behind each healthcare professional.

At VITAL WorkLife, we support the professional well-being of your workforce, while also understanding the humanity behind basic needs for flourishing—all aspects of a person matter, in all contexts. Recognizing the needs of people is the most important action any organization can take.

We've collaborated with Harvard's Human Flourishing Program to integrate a flourishing measure in our core processes including at our intake and as a post-outcome measurement. This evidence-based tool allows for a data-driven approach to address flourishing in support of our client's well-being, holistically. As leading mental health and well-being experts for healthcare organizations and their workforces, cultivating flourishing has become our compass, inspiring those we serve to journey away from burnout and towards a life filled with flourishing and growth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitchell Best". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

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Executive Summary

In 2024 we will continue to see the collateral impacts of the pandemic on human connection—connections with self, family and community. As a new normal for life, work and play has been forged in our society, a need for new connections is also growing. Connecting with others across all life's pursuits will emerge in new and innovative ways.

With a whole-person approach to well-being, healthcare professionals will focus on what really matters, the connection to themselves and those around them. Years of stress, trauma, isolation and the need to do more with less caused deterioration of patient, colleague and family connections.

However, with reduced stigma, barriers and willingness to connect with others, healthcare professionals look to regain that base which makes them steadfast and flourish.

01

Relationship with Self and Loved Ones

The universal feeling of overwhelm when balancing relationships, work and self has everyone seeking efficiency while ensuring important connections are nurtured.

02

Relationship with Work and Career

Addressing the stigma around seeking help in the medical field is crucial to preventing early retirements and maintaining a healthy workforce, especially in light of the predicted physician shortages in the United States by 2034.

03

Relationship with Systems and Community

Meaningful well-being improvement isn't entirely up to oneself. Positive strides in overall organizational well-being will be more quickly achieved from healthcare organizations whose leadership team exemplifies compassion, flexibility and a full commitment to well-being initiatives.

01

Relationship with Self

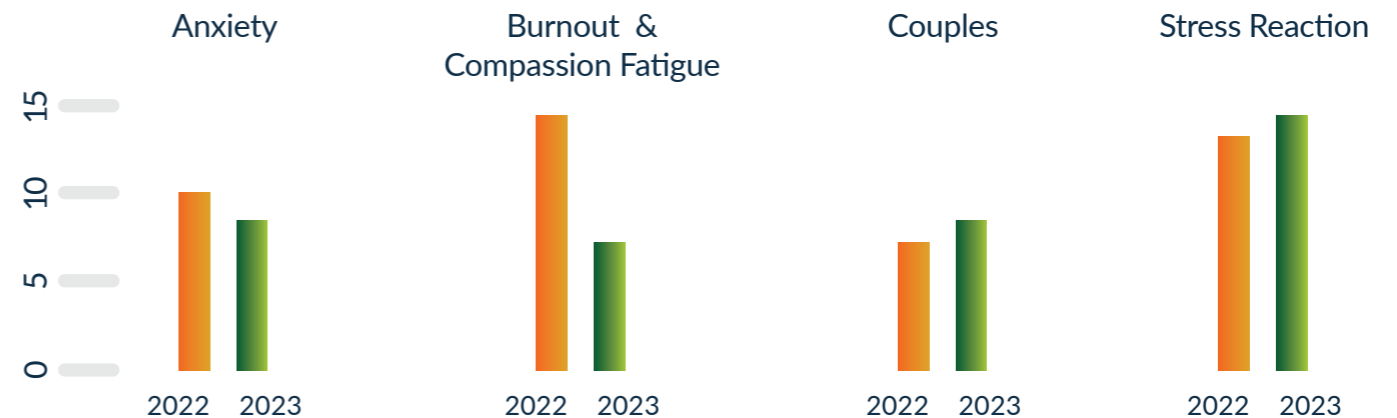
Providing well-being options to support busy physicians can be life-changing. In 2023, VITAL WorkLife's Concierge engagement brought higher convenience to physicians and their families. It included travel arrangements, event ticket bookings, party planning and restaurant reservations. Some physicians even organized their wedding and honeymoon with this service. WorkLife Concierge freed up valuable time for physicians, allowing them to focus on patient care and spend quality moments with loved ones.

Physicians typically work over 50 hours a week, as reported in Medscape's 2023 Physician Compensation Report¹. Electronic Health Record (EHR) usage has increased, with healthcare providers spending an extra 28 minutes daily compared to 2019². Research also shows that for every hour spent on direct clinical patient care, physicians allocate nearly 2 hours to EHR management and desk work³. This can create a disconnection from patients, contrary to initial career goals of building meaningful connections.

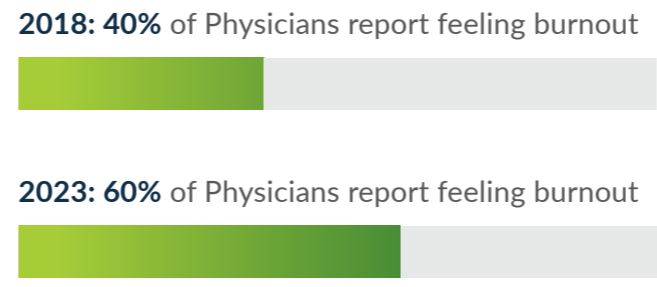
The demanding nature of their profession can strain physicians' self-love and self-relationship. Genuine self-love requires intentional time to listen to one's inner voice, understand personal values and prioritize self-care.

Primary Well-Being Need for Physicians, APPs & Residents⁴

While burnout and compassion fatigue remain primary concerns for physicians in 2023, emerging data reveals increasing stress experienced by our physicians and ineffective reaction and coping mechanisms to manage their own well-being. This stress and anxiety is not only present in the workplace but throughout their social lives as personal relationships are getting sidelined by heavy caseloads, long hours and administrative duties.



Physician Burnout⁵



Top WorkLife Concierge Requests⁴



1. Medscape, 2023.
 2. Ann Fam. Med, 2024.
 3. Ann Int. Med, 2016.
 4. VITAL WorkLife, 2022-2023.
 5. Physicians Foundation, 2023.

01

Healthcare's Family Equation

It can be a balancing act for healthcare professionals to share time with loved ones, and nurture children in their care. They can feel like there aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish everything—often accompanied by feelings of inadequacy or apathy. Prioritizing quality family time fosters deeper connections and better interactions.

Family relationships often suffer first and most, even when career and professional achievements are progressing. Maintaining connection and understanding with family is still a challenge. Add on long hours and career stress, and a new layer of guilt is formed from feeling “less than” in their lives or residual family conflict from missed time at home.

Female physicians often face these family challenges in greater capacity than males. In 2019¹, statistics showed more women than men were enrolled in medical school. This significant gender shift stresses the crucial responsibilities of healthcare leaders—to support female physician's well-being and satisfaction—as **68 percent of female physicians often felt burned out compared to male physicians (54%)²**.

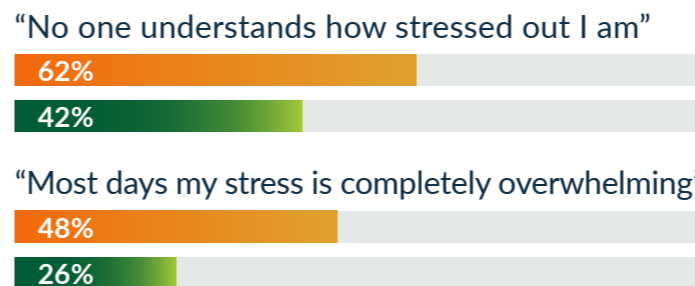


Rise of Women in Healthcare
 Authored by Penelope Hsu, MD, VITAL WorkLife Peer Coach

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Stress of Adults with Children Under 18³

From the October 2023 Stress in America survey, parents were more likely than other adults to report increases in certain stressors.



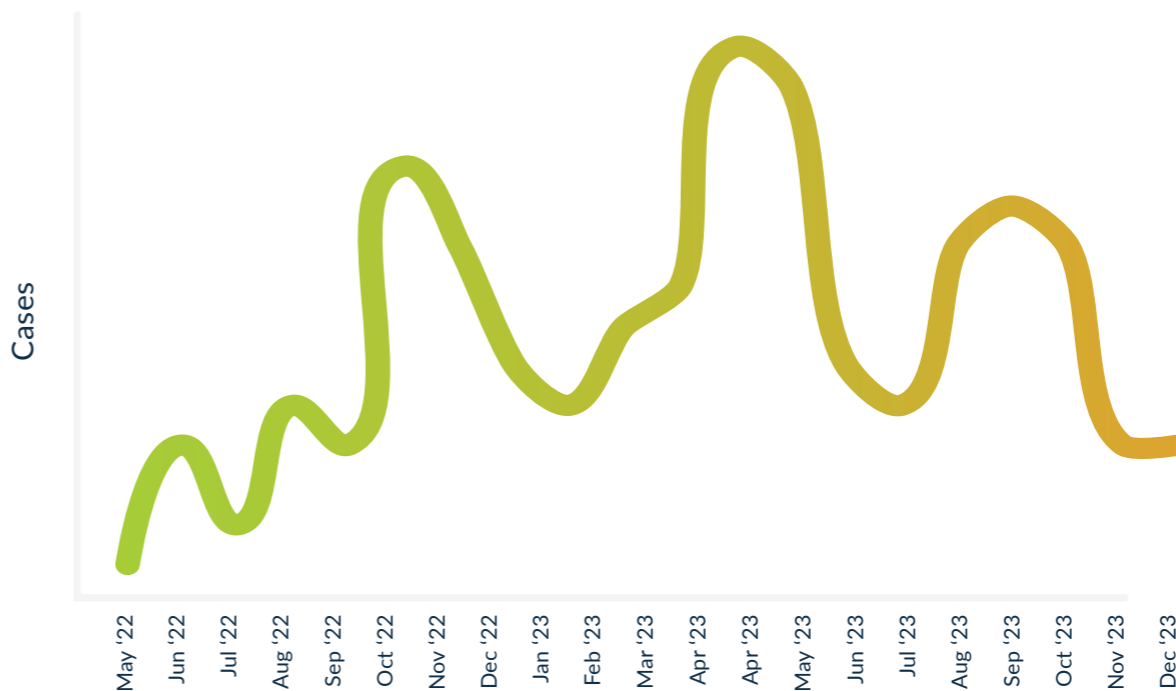
Parents (adults with children under 18)
 Adults without children under 18

Parent coaching can greatly help physicians. Just because they are physicians, doesn't mean they are immune to the throes of raising good humans. **It's important to normalize the beautiful challenge of being a parent.**

—Karli Koski, VITAL WorkLife Parent Coach

Parent Coaching Cases⁴

Parent Coaching helps parents learn and develop effective parenting techniques, such as communication strategies, positive discipline methods and conflict resolution skills, while assisting parents in building strong and positive relationships with their children by fostering understanding, empathy and trust.



1. Association of American Medical Colleges, 2019.
 2. The Physicians Foundation, 2023.
 3. American Psychological Association, 2023.
 4. VITAL WorkLife, 2023.

02

Long Hours, Longer Road to Balanced Well-being

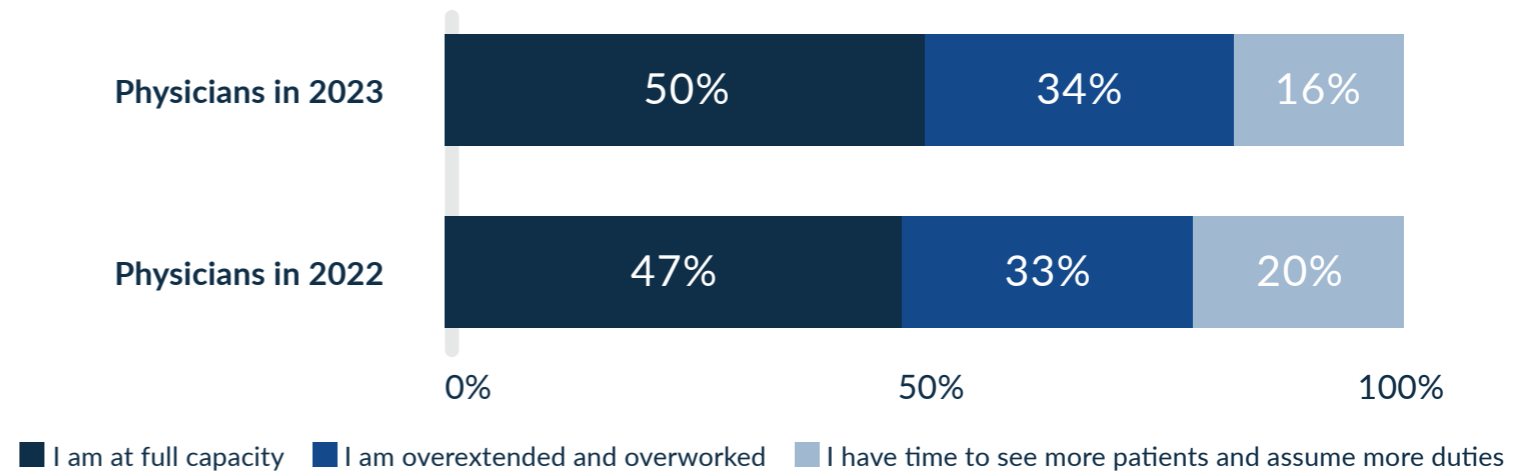
Addressing physician loneliness, exacerbated by long hours and workplace stressors like burnout and compassion fatigue, necessitates a comprehensive approach. Healthcare organizations can contribute significantly by fostering a stigma-free workplace, instituting well-being programs and providing mental health resources.

VITAL WorkLife’s Peer Coaching program exemplifies this approach, with **92% of physicians attesting that it helped them remain in their role and/or medicine**¹. Peer Coaching capitalizes on shared experiences, cultivating trust and rekindling the power of human connection. Forward-thinking organizations are using our well-being solutions as a competitive edge in recruitment and retention.

100%
of VITAL WorkLife
Peer Coaching
participants surveyed
would **recommend
Peer Coaching**³

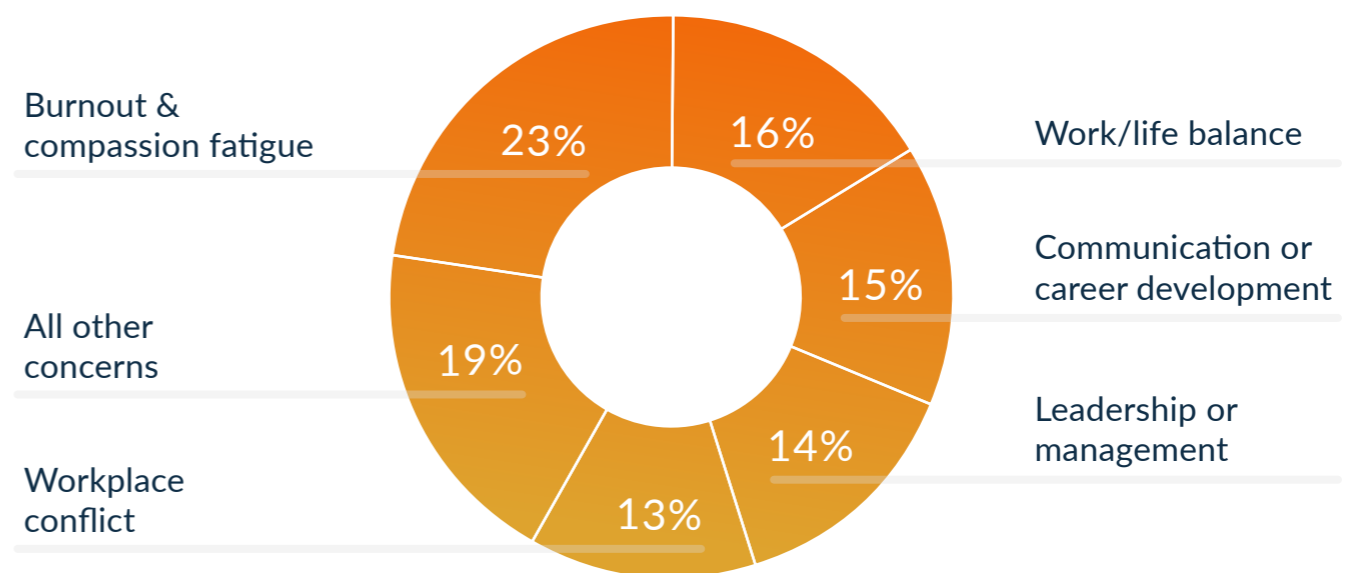
Our most engaged clients consistently incorporate Peer Coaching into onboarding, proactively setting clinicians up for success. Some residency programs even schedule an “opt-out” mental health appointment for new residents, emphasizing mental well-being, introducing VITAL WorkLife resources and addressing potential issues. In a demanding healthcare environment, this holistic support can be a lifeline, fostering connection and resilience among physicians.

Physician Attitudes on Workload²



Why Physicians and Providers are Seeking Support³

Top five professional concerns addressed with VITAL WorkLife coaching and counseling in 2023.



1. VITAL WorkLife, 2022.
2. The Physicians Foundation, 2023.
3. VITAL WorkLife, 2023.

02

Stigma and Social Support

Research¹ shows a strong link between social support at work and lower rates of burnout, greater satisfaction and higher productivity. Flourishing at different career stages means accepting the varying needs, expectations and life obligations that define being human.

Physician burnout, disconnection and dissatisfaction with the current healthcare system can lead to early retirement and a reluctance among medical professionals to remain in the field. Intentional planning (for

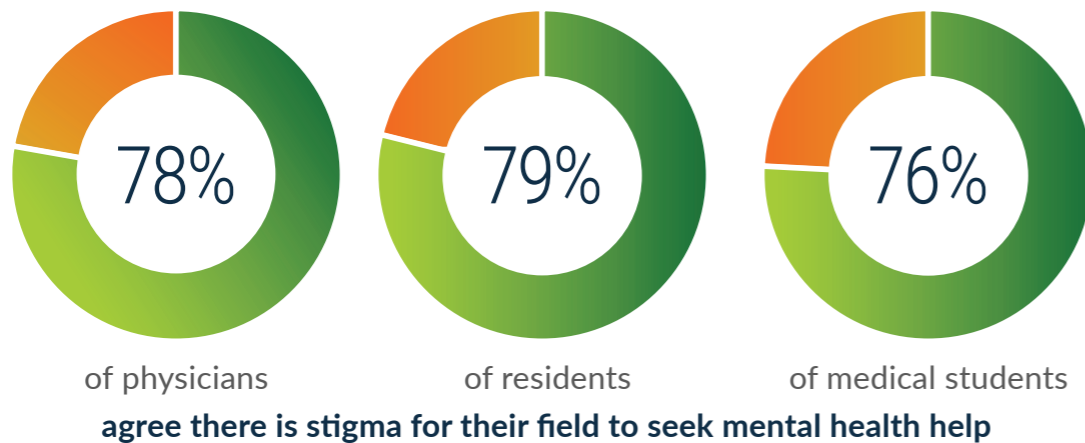
individuals, teams and organizations) can support smoother career-stage transitions that are devoid of guilt and shame.

Acknowledging the stigma that blocks physicians from accessing help and understanding its causes is a first step for leaders in the workplace to take. Individuals may think that asking for help is a sign of weakness, fear judgment from their peers or think doing so will take too much time away from their responsibility to others.

Checking in with colleagues and sharing resource information are simple actions that individuals can take to help peers. Modeling help-seeking and providing access to peer coaching and counseling, as well as addressing system-level burnout drivers, are ways that organizational leaders can improve their physician's well-being. Taken together, these steps can promote clinician well-being and banish the stigma of seeking help.

Ingrained Stigma²

Physicians, residents and medical students continue to agree there is stigma surrounding mental health and seeking help, signaling there is still work to do.



Projected Physician Shortage by 2034³

Specialty Area	Shortage Range
Primary Care (e.g. family medicine, general pediatrics, geriatric medicine)	Between 17,800 and 48,000 physicians
Nonprimary Care (e.g. surgical, medical, anesthesiology, neurology)	Between 21,000 and 77,100 physicians

23%

of U.S. medical and nursing students think about quitting⁴, identifying that the level needed for social support still isn't there. Or if it is, it's not nearly enough.

1. APA, 2023.
 2. The Physicians Foundation, 2023.
 3. Association of American Medical Colleges, 2021.
 4. Elsevier Health, 2023.

03

Flexibility from Bedside to Boardroom

In 2024, there will be much to observe in hospitals' and health systems' financial health and initiatives to attract and retain clinical staff. Leadership and executives are also facing the stress to do more with less and being flexible, just like their clinical counterparts.

Leveraging the convergence of new players in healthcare like retailers and tech companies, not to mention new possibilities thanks to AI and machine learning will be important for leaders and systems to be competitive and appealing to healthcare employees. Under this convergence, change can create more stress before the benefits are reaped, reiterating the need for proactive investments in well-being resources.

As an industry, goals and strategy around well-being must also spread to the youngest in medicine—our medical students and residents. Institutions and systems must change the way they approach well-being, and not just professionally, for this population. While they are more apt to reach out for mental health help than their older colleagues, they share the same risks of suicide and burnout.

Connections in Systems and Structures¹

Organizations who seek out more connection—from executives to physicians to frontline to patient—will see the greatest success in clinical outcomes and employee satisfaction.

“Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have **the promise of bridging gaps in medical education and creating efficiencies for a more human-centered approach to health care.** For example, we're looking at natural language processing for real-time dictation and reporting that can **improve health equity and allow doctors more time with patients** to address their physical, mental, emotional, and social needs.”

—**Sharmila Makhija, MD, MBA**, Founding Dean & CEO, Alice L. Walton School of Medicine

“In 2024, **we can expect to see true changes to compensation structures, operational workflows, tooling (with AI technologies playing a key role), and new scopes of roles.** The organizations that do this right will see an outsized impact on their ability to recruit and retain clinicians, while driving positive outcomes for patients. Organizations that continue the old playbook of **'wellness days and stress balls'** will visibly struggle.”

—**Nworah Ayogu, MD, MBA**, General Manager, Amazon Clinic

Generational Shifts Starting in Medical Community²

More medical students are seeking help through trusted connections, but the change isn't felt as profoundly at the doctorate level by physicians.

45% of medical students **know a colleague/peer who has considered suicide**

31% of physicians **agree their workplace culture prioritizes physician well-being**

47% of medical students **have sought mental attention for a mental health problem**

20% of physicians **know someone that has either considered, attempted or died by suicide in the last 12 months (2023)**

1. Forbes, 2023.

2. The Physicians Foundation, 2023.

03

National Attention on Healthcare Worker Burnout

Human beings are impacted by the contexts they are embedded in. The American Psychological Association described recent changes in the mental and physical health and well-being of individuals pre- and post-pandemic as indicative of collective trauma. Individuals across all demographics are responding to the turmoil of global, national

and local events, the economic and political environment, climate-related disasters, market fluctuations and cultural change. These changes and the uncertainty they bring must inform the holistic work of well-being.

Our collective experiences over the past few years do not necessarily translate to collective

impact. The complexity and diversity of human beings means that we are all affected differently by experiences, even shared ones. Physicians and the entire healthcare team are individuals impacted by recent and long-standing stressors; and the landscape is changing.

Helping Employees in Growth

Shanafelt¹ et. al. identify that well-being for physicians has evolved—“moving from ignorance and neglect to an era of awareness and insight.” There is more acceptance of the vulnerability of asking for support and for the self-compassion of physicians who recognize their human need for connection and importance of personal well-being.

This increased awareness will necessitate leaders to provide resources and support to foster this evolution, otherwise this could potentially lead to feelings of dissatisfaction.



1. Shanafelt et. al., 2021.

The Road Ahead

Mental health needs are increasingly more complex, and improving well-being is primary to individual and organizational success. We achieve this by providing healthcare professionals with evidence-based, top-tier solutions, showcasing clinical leadership in promoting clinician well-being, and pioneering innovative approaches to enhance organizational excellence. VITAL WorkLife's goal is to provide a blend of high tech, high touch solutions that empower healthcare professionals to flourish and sustain resilience and personal well-being.

As mental health experts in 2024, we are keenly aware of the significance of connection in enhancing opportunities for flourishing.

By prioritizing the importance of relationships, whether with ourselves, friends, family, colleagues or within our organizations and communities, we empower individuals to thrive in both their professional and personal lives, ultimately reducing stigma.

We achieve this through our focus on:

- Inclusive access for partners, couples, families, teens and children, providing counseling, coaching and a range of additional well-being services.
- Tailored solutions specifically for clinicians, amplifying our established legacy to provide unparalleled access to support and resources for mental health.
- Setting the industry standard for innovative peer support solutions, benefiting physicians and the entire care team.
- Insights drawn from robust data analytics and reporting, alongside clinical findings, from our collaboration with the Harvard Human Flourishing Measure, now integrated into our clinical experience.



[Video Link >](#)

At VITAL WorkLife, we're deeply invested in, and have a 15-year legacy serving healthcare organizations and their workforces. Our innovative solutions are leading the way in helping physicians, nurses and entire care teams address professional burnout, life challenges and barriers to seeking help. Enhancing the joy of practice among healthcare professionals, with growing shortages of physicians and nurses, necessitates a dedication to well-being to achieve greater productivity and retention for organizations and greater work and life fulfillment for the workforce.

Best Practices for Consistent and Predictable Program Results

Promote program resources during onboarding to normalize and encourage seeking support earlier rather than waiting until burnout takes hold.

Engage with the resources yourself, demonstrating transparent leadership by sharing your authentic experiences with others. This will allow you to speak about the resources with confidence and clarity.

Publish VITAL WorkLife content and engagement materials on your intranet and include in regular email or newsletter communications to your teams.

Utilize QR codes in email signatures to promote the VITAL WorkLife App. [Download from your Resource Site!](#)

Work closely with your VITAL WorkLife team to set program goals, determine accountability within the organization for communicating and promoting the resources as well as collaboration for ongoing administration of the program.

Have trained **Well-Being Advocates**, who can provide helpful support to colleagues and keep program resources visible—[click here to learn more about this program](#).

Encourage download of the VITAL WorkLife Mobile App during meetings and huddles. Make sure to have your company's registration credentials handy and highlight well-being assessments and orientation video to educate the robust nature of the resources.

Refer staff to VITAL WorkLife peer coaching or support when the following scenarios arise:

- New staff are being onboarded
- A team member is interested in honing leadership or communication skills
- Those struggling with technology, charting or new processes/protocols
- Outliers with patient satisfaction scores or patient issues
- Recent adverse outcome, sentinel event or medical malpractice suit



Data Sources

American Psychology Association, Stress in America, 2023

Ann Fam Med, 2024;22:12-18

Ann Intern Med, 2016

The Association of American Medical Colleges, 2019

The Association of American Medical Colleges, 2021

Elsevier Health, Clinician of the Future, 2023

Forbes, 2024

Mayo Clinic Proceedings, Physician Well-Being 2.0, 2021

Medscape, Physician Compensation Report, 2023

The Physicians Foundation, 2023 Physician Survey

VITAL WorkLife, Peer Coaching Pre/Post Surveys 2022-2023

VITAL WorkLife, Case Data 2022-2023

Related Resources



Don't Invest in Well-Being if You're Not Invested
By Sharon C. Kiely, MD, MDM, FACP

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Healthcare Executive Burnout
Authored by Steven E. Swanson, MD, MBA

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