

As Companies Start Planning Post-pandemic Workplace, Employees' Mental Health Must Be Considered, Experts Say

RAY SCHEY: We are discussing mental health in the workplace, an increasingly important topic to a lot of you in the business community and throughout the Valley. We're going to discuss how mental health has become one of the most talked about challenges for American workers and their employees. Our panelists are Steven Sheets, president and CEO of Southwest Behavioral & Health Services; Peggy Chase, president and CEO of Terros Health; Alicia Cowdrey, department of psychiatry with Valleywise Health and Justin Bayless, CEO of Bayless Integrated Healthcare.

Justin, what are some signs that we should look for in identifying employees who are struggling?

JUSTIN BAYLESS: The signs and symptoms are the same prior to the pandemic that they are now. So, any leader in their organization has the understanding and ability to know their staff, and what's going on. I really look at five key areas. Withdrawal from normal activities or group activities or engagement in projects. I think about staff being easily irritated, a change in a behavior or attitude. Another major sign historically has been excessive time off without really explaining why. I think the last one is confusion and distraction, lack of focus on certain tasks or priorities, which often leads to someone showing signs of being overwhelmed.

And just from a managerial perspective those are key signs that we see that there may be something going on and we ask our managers, leaders and champions to really take a look and sit down and discuss what's going on with our staff and our internal Bayless family.

RAY SCHEY: Alicia, do you want to add to that, and then also share how mental health

affects businesses and their employees

ALICIA L. COWDREY: Some of those common things that people may experience are irritation, anger, feeling uncertain, feeling nervous or anxious, lacking motivation, feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burnt out, being sad or depressed, having trouble sleeping or having trouble concentrating on their work might be things that are affecting that workload during the day. It's really important that we address mental health with our businesses and employees because it is a common thing that people experience, and certainly with the pandemic it's affected a lot more people in a lot of ways.

One of the good things that's come out of this, is that more people are comfortable talking about anxiety, depression, isolation and stress, which is going to eliminate some of that stigma because some of the stigma surrounding mental illnesses is why people don't get help. If we are having poor mental health and stress with our employees, that's affecting their job performance and their productivity, their engagement with their work, their communication with coworkers and maybe even their physical or mental capability and daily functioning. The workplace is going to be a key location for activities to help improve the well-being, both physical and mental health care of our folks.

RAY SCHEY: Steven, what does wellness mean to your organization and then how do you create a culture of wellness?

STEVEN SHEETS: What we've seen, and I'm sure that my colleagues have seen this as well is, we don't pick up the phone anymore and we

our Zoom meetings, when we could have just had a five-minute phone call and really address the topic. And so, wellness is really leader driven. Wellness needs to be mirrored from the chief officer's seat or the C-suite, and then pushed down into the organization and actually allowing our staff to say, "It's OK to take five minutes and talk to each other. It's OK to get off Zoom and go use the restroom. And it's OK to go take a walk around the parking lot. It's all right to take a break." The more that we see this technically driven world. the less we actually take care of ourselves. I'm sure that all of us have been Zoom fatigued, or GoToMeeting fatigued, or whatever technical thing we're using. But the important thing is really taking time away, emailing staff, telling them how much they mean to the organization; having real conversations that are not even work related. When in reality, every conversation is work related. I think we have to think through the wellness impact of everything we do from the moment we start our day to the moment we end, and really embed that importance of taking time to care for ourselves. We have to mirror it. We have to be the champion of it, and we have to provide examples of how to do it as well.

RAY SCHEY: Peggy, historically wellness in the workplace is focused on employee's physical health. When did that change, and then what are the benefits of looking at wellness from an integrated, both physical and mental health point of view or perspective?

PEGGY CHASE: It's interesting. Here in Arizona, we've actually been leaders in integrating physical and mental health. As we

started looking into that with our patients, we had to first look inside Terros Health to see how we care for our employees in that whole person, integrated way. And really, the whole concept of what's occurring in the mind affects the body, what's occurring in the body affects the mind. They are intrinsically connected. And so, for us as employers in this field, we have been implementing many different ways of looking at, not just the physical health, but also the mental health and well-being, so that we can help people achieve overall well-being.

I know, just because I know these other companies as well, things like walking challenges and water challenges promote self-care. During the pandemic, something we did at Terros Health that we're going to continue going forward, is that we actually implemented care teams. Basically, when we do start seeing effects occurring at any of our locations or with specific teams who check in with employees, they talk through any challenges. Our employees have found this invaluable.

That's something that happens immediately, right now, in the moment, when things are happening. It is that specialness around caring for that mental health around the trauma they might've gone through, or just a challenging situation. We know the fear level has been high between the pandemic and social injustice. There has been a lot for us to do to integrate mental and physical health.

RAY SCHEY: Justin, how can telehealth help our employees during this transition?

JUSTIN BAYLESS: The cat's out of the

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bag on telehealth now, right? I think prior to the pandemic the adoption levels and people not being sure whether or not they could use telehealth as a modality to really help their overall health and wellness is now no longer a question. There's still a lot of stigma specifically in the workplace for people to raise their hand and say there's something wrong or they're having an emotional barrier, there's stress involved that's really impacting their day-to-day activities. And so, I think telehealth, again, as a tool, really can give people the flexibility and the level of security and safety that they don't necessarily have to feel like they're going to be labeled.

Regardless of what type of culture you set, they are always going to be people who have the concerns around, "If I speak up around my mental health issues is this going to impact the way that the company views me as an individual and my work performance?" Going back to it again, I think one of the major benefits for telehealth for our society, is really giving people that safety, the confidentiality and the ability to leverage services wherever they are. If they're having a tough time in the middle of the day, they can go out to their car, access telehealth, and actually have a visit that can really help them reset their day and get around whatever issues may present themselves. They could have a private space in their office. I think for us, at Bayless, we've really leveraged that as a tool, and we've seen the adoption rates and the abilities to treat patients as well as patient outcomes actually improve since we started to use telehealth as our main modality of service.

RAY SCHEY: Alicia, tell us how employers can promote the awareness about the importance of mental health and stress management?

ALICIA L. COWDREY: I think the keyword there is promotion. We want promotion programs, they've been proven to be successful, particularly when they combine both mental health and physical health interventions. It's a good, optimal setting to create that culture of health within the workplace. Actionable steps might include making self-assessment tools available to all employees, everybody can take these, it's not just certain folks. Offering clinical screenings for depression or anxiety, and then giving feedback and referral when appropriate. Making sure that there's insurance available for low or no out-of-pocket costs for mental health, medications and counseling.

Providing lifestyle coaching, counseling or self-management programs can be really helpful as well, to catch things earlier on before they become maybe a broader issue. Distributing material like brochures, flyers and videos, to all employees about signs and



symptoms of poor mental health, so that folks are educated in their opportunities for improvement or treatment. And then hosting seminars or workshops, mindfulness, breathing exercises, meditation, just ways to overall eliminate and reduce anxiety and stress can really make that important. Providing managers training also can be helpful to help recognize those signs and symptoms that folks may be experiencing. And then giving employees opportunities to participate in the actual decisions about issues that affect job stress, so it empowers people to address this earlier on.

RAY SCHEY: Steven, burnout, mental health and stress are prevalent pretty much in all industries. How do you integrate awareness among your employees? What do you do?

STEVEN SHEETS: What's interesting about our industry is, we're the experts, right? People come to us for assistance, but we oftentimes don't take our own advice. It's hard as leaders or as practitioners to practice what we preach or to put in practice what we tell or assist our clients in actually putting into practice. I think it goes back to mirroring balance or mirroring how we implement balance, and as leaders we're being looked at, we're being noticed by our employees, by our friends, by our families. Specifically, here at Southwest, we've been able to figure out ways to engage with each other in different ways where, one-on-one, people might go hiking. One-on-one, people might take again a walk around the parking lot.

What we've done is, we've implemented site strategies, and so we've let our leaders really champion what would work for their team when it comes to awareness, but also actually putting it into practice of reducing burnout and ensuring that we're listening to our staff and actually having action. I think that we just continually learn. Burnout will always be here; it always has been here. Burnout just looks

different. And so, as long as we're aware of what those signs and symptoms are, we will just continue to adapt the way we address burnout, so that we can be effective in our roles long term.

RAY SCHEY: Peggy, in what ways has mental health care evolved since the pandemic began?

PEGGY CHASE: It's evolved quite a bit. For many of our companies, we've been working on telehealth on a small scale, and when all of a sudden, the insurances allowed it to be large scale overnight, predominantly, in less than a week, days, sometimes 24 hours, our companies were able to convert to telehealth. And now, we've learned the value of offering patients in-person care and telehealth. It's very interesting because for substance use disorder treatment, groups are the preferred modality of care. And in that arena, we're even able to do these hybrid models where it can be some people in-person, some people via video and some people telephonically. That enables us to expand services in even a bigger way.

In mental health we've really seen that fear has been really prevalent. I would assume my colleagues also may have seen a higher rate of deaths among our employees and families. It has been important for us to be there for them and help them through that. Because when you see a death toll, like what we've had through this pandemic, it affects everyone, and that includes our employees. And so, we've worked hard to implement methods and ways to support our employees as they have experienced loss. And then isolation and just missing family members, that's another area that's been really tough for people.

And so, we made a point of being there for our employees, understanding and talking about what's going on in their lives and what they are doing and how are they taking care of themselves.

One of the other things that we did at Terros

Health were weekly videos for our employees, creating conversations around the pandemic. To help them, we started highlighting all of the services that we offer. Then we found that more of our employees were actually accessing services because they knew more about what was available. There are so many ways that can really support employees, but during this pandemic, it's been really important to be present in as many ways as possible.

RAY SCHEY: Justin, how has Bayless partnered with local employers to provide innovative services during the pandemic? To be able to assist their employees with their health and wellness?

JUSTIN BAYLESS: I've been fortunate through our strategic partnership with Magellan Health over the past five months or so now, to really look nationally, not just locally. I can tell you employers across the country are starting to say, our employees and our culture needs more than the traditional benefits structure that's been offered under, a simple ASO insurance or an EAP program. And so, what we're starting to see is employers take a step back and say, one, we have an economy that's about to reopen and it's going to be a more competitive environment. Two, people are still dealing with the effects of this pandemic. Three, how can we think differently around creating a structured wellness program for our employees that really addresses both the mind and body?

And so, we've started to work with employers locally in Arizona. Alorica, is an international company that we partnered with almost a year ago now. They've taken a really progressive approach around thinking through what really impacts their employees, and how do you create wellness from day one. We're a part of their new employee orientation. By the way, we're all virtual with Alorica right now as well. We have wellness coaches, licensed mental health therapists, registered nurses that provide a myriad of services from individual counseling, assessments, therapy for themselves and their family, cooking classes, self-help, meditation, exercise from your home, and really thinking about how can they keep their employees engaged, and ultimately bypassing the historical barricade, which has been the benefit structure and sometimes copays and deductibles and the other things that keeps employees from accessing those services.

For us, we're looking more broadly now across the country, and how we can bring a different type of wellness solution to employers that are really thinking differently around a progressive approach, knowing that their employees need something that's going to be a little bit more progressive and ultimately help them with their overall health and wellness.

RAY SCHEY: Alicia, what are some strategies

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to address mental health and stress in the workplace?

ALICIA L. COWDREY: I think it's important to have a variety of strategies because not everybody's going to respond the same way or want the same type of opportunities. Offering a variety of things is going to be important. Having somebody that's a wellness champion within your organization, can be really helpful to guide these things. That's on a bigger level. On a smaller level, I think it's important for people to share their personal experiences to help reduce the stigma. They might look to a leader that says, "Oh, wow, this is a leader that shared their experience with depression and anxiety, and they got help. And what did they do?" It's really important when appropriate to share those experiences, so that folks know that they're not alone, and that people who are in a position of leadership have also had struggles because I think that opens up more of

And then again, having a culture that adopts behaviors to promote stress management, taking some breaks during the workday and taking that walk around the building or the park or something like that, that's really going to model those behaviors. And then it's just really basic stuff, eating healthy, well-balanced meals, exercising regularly, getting an adequate night's sleep can all be really important. And then other promotion of stress management things such as yoga and meditation and mindfulness. And then, as is safe, building real life face-to-face social connections, so that we can improve those things.

Taking time to reflect on positive experiences can be really important too, to express happiness and gratitude. I think it's been easy to focus on the negative side of those things,

but to really home in on that. And then I think it's important to set work and personal goals that are related to your wellness and ask for help as is needed. If you're not getting to where you need and you're struggling, it's good to talk about that, have an open culture around those things.

RAY SCHEY: Steven, how do you engage leaders to support and collaborate in developing employee well-being strategy?

STEVEN SHEETS: That transparency aspect couldn't go further than what it truly does. It transforms relationships, it transforms the ability to trust your leaders. It really helps us as an organization, whether it's Valleywise or whether it's Southwest, to really push down, that we all have challenges with certain levels of mental health concerns. No one is exempt from mental health concerns. It's just the severity and then the intensity that people may experience. That transparency factor couldn't be more important. The more that we're able to baseline with our staff, the better outcome we're going to see just from an organization standpoint.

We've actually just implemented more site-based leadership over this because I'm not entirely sure if the control needs to be from the top. I think that we need to promote it from the top. Championing people is so important and allowing certain people to take control and really know their culture of their site. When you have multiple venues, it's really hard to know what culture one site has over the other, so it's really important to utilize your experts within those sites around various locations.

Our chief quality officer started a "2,021 miles in 2021." I got involved in it and I'm probably behind on my daily average, but it not only helps encourage people to be healthy, but

it also encourages that work-life balance. And it puts a little healthy competition in there, so we can push our colleagues forward. We've given our site leaders a dedicated budget for work-life balance. We've said, "You know your team, you get to do an activity, virtual or in-person, just make sure you're safe." And then teams get to do what they want to do. We believe it's shown some positive retention for staff, but also, it's helping reduce some of the stressors that come from a virtual world when we don't get to see each other face to face. And it also gives people an outlet to just be with others.

RAY SCHEY: Peggy, from your perspective, what are some of the mental health issues that you see that are impacting employees? And then how can employers identify the signs that that employee needs help especially in the remote work environment, it makes it a little more challenging?

PEGGY CHASE: One of the areas that is so important to recognize is 2020 was a year with many challenges. We've had the pandemic, and in addition to that, we've had race relations and social injustices really come to light. And then we've had some political challenges as well, and all of those impact everyone. We did a lot of things this year that are important, things that we'd had in the works prior to the pandemic, they were just being launched during the pandemic. But employee resource groups are something that are really important, so that you have some of those affinity groups that employees can get together and have conversations and work through solutions, or just even having important hard conversations.

We even started a group that's called "Uninterrupted Conversations," and it's amazing because a lot of mental health can be helped by conversation. It's not always the

end all be all, but it certainly helps. And being an open employer to allow for and encourage these conversations. It's not where it has to be controlled from the top. It's really where at a leadership level, it's allowing for and putting them in place, and then letting people in the company to be able to do what helps them along on their path.

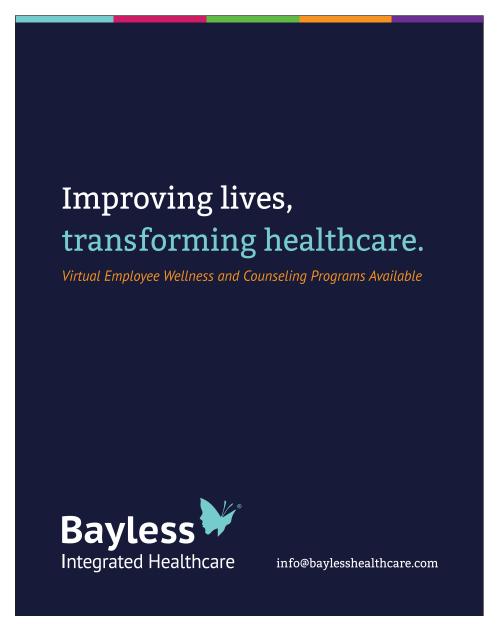
Also, frequent absenteeism is something that requires attention, because you don't know what's going on in a person's life, and you don't know how serious it may be for them. And so, to approach this with compassion and asking that question, in a trauma-informed environment, are things going OK around you? Are there things going on in your life that we can help to support you? And to come from that place versus, it's easy from the employment side to say, "you're not showing up for work, and we need to know why." And to see if maybe something much more going on in that employee's life. And to first give that space to see, and to hear and to listen, and to make it a safe space for that conversation.

I think that's so important, because people have been dealing with a lot of fear. And so really being able to work through that, talk through that, and meet people where they are, and then lead them through that time has been critical.

RAY SCHEY: How are leaders overall from each of your perspectives coping with their own personal mental health issues and thinking about the employees and their staff? And they've got all that stress too, as well as some of their own.

ALICIA L. COWDREY: I think it's just being

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transparent and talking about it. I think it's approaching people. Approaching people with compassion and curiosity versus judgment. So really having some conversations around how are you really doing? Not the, "Hey, how's it going? Great. Nice to see you. Have a great day." Really understanding, setting aside some time to sit with someone and say, "How are things really going for you?" It's OK if they're not going well and sharing some of your own experiences about the struggles because the struggle and the emotions behind that are all very common to us, despite what the maybe individual circumstances.

RAY SCHEY: And how are the leaders themselves doing with their own personal mental health issues?

PEGGY CHASE: This has been an incredibly stressful time for leaders. We've made decisions quicker than we've ever made, I think in our careers, as least as long as I have been in the industry. And then you're really looking at, for every decision, what is the impact that that's going to have. And when you're putting safety at such a high level, as we have over this last year, it's really been one of the most challenging leadership years that I've seen. One of the things that we found in our leadership meetings, is looking at what's going on in your lives and that check-in. Also, humor and laughter are so important, especially during the pandemic.

Even when there are challenges in life, there can be joy in life. And just really working toward that and celebrating the successes, celebrating the successes of what we've accomplished in the workplace and celebrating

the successes in the lives of the patients we are caring for and what we've been doing on the frontlines. These are things that help to lift us up.

up.

The other piece was taking paid time off and taking sick leave when you need it. People started not taking it. They thought that because they couldn't go somewhere, that they shouldn't take their time off. We started having conversations about what to do in place, in order to take your time off and we started encouraging that because we could really start to see in the leaders their exhaustion. A lot of it was because since people didn't know where to go and that they couldn't go places, then they weren't taking that time. We encouraged [them] and people started finding ways to take time for themselves. We had people who started biking together and different things like that. We started looking at this throughout the company and encouraging staff to take their time off. We impressed upon them the importance of self-care by having our leaders model it.

RAY SCHEY: Steven, how do you provide health plan information and wellness resources to a culturally diverse workforce?

STEVEN SHEETS: Email, webinars, online venues, but we've tried to be an organization that says yes, and then iron out the details later. There are some employees that prefer face to face or a phone call, or something a little more transparent than just being over video or doing a recording and then sending it out to individuals. Oftentimes our health plans, the health plans that are providing health insurance to our employees, have more resources than what we really truly believe on the surface that they have. And so, it's important to influence and push out, these are your options for EAP,

or these are your options for being screened or these are your options for getting a vaccination.

And so, when we can make that real, in time for our staff, they feel like they're in the know, they feel like they have information at their fingertips and they're able to actually make movement and make progress towards taking care of themselves. And so, many different venues or many different options for all of our workforce, but with the same intention, healthy life, healthy balance and then ultimately, a healthy or really a productive outcome in performance and overall satisfaction in the job.

RAY SCHEY: Alicia, what work-related factors can add to the stress of the pandemic?

ALICIA L. COWDREY: There's a variety of things that may be going on for folks, depending on what type of work that they do. People might be concerned about the risk of what they're exposed to by the virus at work, depending on if you're front-line health care worker, or if you're working from home, taking care of personal and family needs while we're working is really challenging for folks, that may be trying to balance people going to school or other things that need attention at the same time when it's all happening in one set of four walls. Managing a different workload. People have had to learn new skills and ways to do things about their own type of work.

Lack of access to the right tools or equipment to perform your job, might have been easy to call an IT person to help, but now you're the IT person too, if you're working from home. There are feelings that people might have about the type of work they're doing, like not contributing enough if you're working from home or guilt about not being on the front line or the opposite, the stress of being on the front line and not having the ability to work from home. Uncertainty about their future, of their workplace or your employment. Learning all those new tools and dealing with technical difficulties and then adapting a different workspace or work schedule. All of those factors can contribute to a ton of stress.

RAY SCHEY: Peggy, in what ways does Terros Health support the physical and mental health needs of its employees, and what are some best practices for other employers to do that'll help

PEGGY CHASE: As an employer, know what your Employee Assistance Program really and truly has, and look at that and ask if it is enough. I would say that in most cases it's not. There are more options out there these days. We looked at our program and then enhanced it

This care team concept that we put in place has been amazing in helping and supporting our employees by having people within the company who can respond to whatever is going on in the moment. Then you do still help them to get ongoing services. Being sure that you have a strong Employee Assistance Program with counseling, treatment and care for your employees, as you look at that for their physical health.

Companies spend a tremendous amount of time analyzing and reviewing the physical health insurance and pharmacy benefits they offer. We need to do just as much around the mental health care that we offer for our employees. I would say that we don't do very well at that today, in general. I encourage you, really look at that. Mindfulness is huge. It's more important than you think. Every company can implement mindfulness practices. It costs hardly anything. The training is minimal, but the impact can be huge. When you take a stressful situation and you take a few minutes for breathing exercises, it clears the mind, it clears the soul, and it really helps you

then to work toward the solutions and how to move forward. I encourage everyone to look at implementing mindfulness practices into your company, as they are simple to do.

RAY SCHEY: Justin, you participated in our mental health conversation several months ago. What changes have you seen, then and now too, and what would you have to share with people here that are participating?

JUSTIN BAYLESS: Let's say when we had our conversation last year in the early stage of the pandemic, people were still under the assumption that this was going to end sooner than later, we're just working through this, we're shut down. People are now realizing that this is going to have longitudinal effects. There's been quite a bit of studies that have come out of China already that have showed the mental health aspects — as well as Japan — suicide rates going up. Just because we're coming out of the pandemic, there is going to be this epidemic, which by the way, was going on prior to the pandemic with mental health and substance use in our country. We're going to see some significant impacts of the pandemic, especially at-risk communities. And for employers, your employees who are, minimum wage or lowerincome employees, they are going to feel the impact of this pandemic more so than anyone else.

We are starting to understand that there are going to be certain areas of the economy that are also going to be left behind. Certain industries are going to be left behind. This is going to cause a tremendous human capital impact. What I'm seeing nationally now, is everyone's waking up to the same questions. What is our response going to be? How are we going to address this? And that's both on the employer side and thinking about it from a health policy side. We're still in the early innings on what's going to happen in terms of mental health reform around the post-Covid-19 impact.

I can tell you across the country, this is a focus point for many organizations. We're in early stages. I think the biggest difference, is the market and society are paying attention to mental health more so now than ever. It's a really great time for people to step back and say, "How do we make sure that in our organization, is our culture one of those that is going to be open, is going to put resources behind this, it's going to think about how the impacts of this are going to affect our employee productivity." Because I'll tell you, if you're not doing that, a year from now, your organization is going to feel those impacts both from a financial perspective and a human capital perspective. **RAY SCHEY:** Alicia, what are some of the tips

to build resilience and to manage job stress? ALICIA L. COWDREY: Human beings are very resilient. We've shown that immensely so over the last year. Making sure that there are tools and ways to encompass that are going to be really important. The first thing is just communication. Communicating with your coworkers, your supervisors about job stress, is going to be really important. It's not something that you want to hold in, you want to identify things that cause stress and work collaboratively to figure out solutions to address those things. Addressing, what do we have control over, and what do we not have control over. Because if we're trying to control things we can't, that's is going to cause a lot of stress. And then increasing that control of things that we can with a consistent daily schedule and routine, it could be similar to what life was like prepandemic, a regular sleep schedule, taking regular breaks, where you might stretch or exercise or check in with your colleagues.

You're not running from one Zoom call to



the next, without those little breaks. Spending time outdoors, being physically active. Particularly when people are working from home, setting a regular end time to your day can be really easy, when the computer is in your house just continue to work, but setting that time. Practicing mindfulness techniques, and people think they have to be a yoga expert to be able to do mindfulness. You don't have to do any of those things. It's as easy as downloading a free app. It might only take a minute. You can do a one-minute meditation and start there, if you're a person who's hesitant to do some of those things. Making sure to still have your hobbies and the things that are fun and lighthearted in your life. Connecting with others about all of these things. Then if you realize that things are getting out of control or that you're not your usual self or other folks in your life are noticing that that's the time to seek help from a professional, so that you can improve those things and work on some skills and some treatments that get you back on track and, back to your usual functioning, and that resilient self that you are.

RAY SCHEY: Where is the best place to find a list of mental health therapy providers for someone that might not currently have health insurance?

PEGGY CHASE: If you don't have health insurance, one of the options around that would be to seek help through one of the community, or federally qualified, health centers. There are quite a few of these, and Terros Health operates four of them. Through these federally qualified health centers, some focused on physical health and in some of the mental health services area, we are able to serve people with no insurance coverage. Depending on the condition, there are also funding sources that some of the mental health providers have, that can also help to support people who don't have insurance. It can be challenging.

However, I do want to just state that depending on the severity of where somebody is in their mental health, having conversations, be sure that you're talking about it, find somebody trusted and have the conversations. This is so important. And then reach out and ask questions. You never know when things change and when more services are available because we're constantly adding more services, especially right now. So, reach out and ask.

RAY SCHEY: How can work culture and language best change to support employee and leadership mental health?

ALICIA L. COWDREY: I think language is really important because it can contribute to the stigma that people have. Example, old school people might say, that "schizophrenia guy." That's not how we want to talk about those things. We want to talk about a person, just like a person with diabetes, a person might have schizophrenia. Looking at those in an equitable way, that we talk about things just like we might talk about a heart attack, we might talk about somebody who had a brain attack or had an experience with leukemia or psychosis. Destigmatizing the language and talking about a person versus a diagnosis can be a smart way to start eliminating the stigma around those things. Having more casual conversations about those things in layman's terms, can be helpful to address those things.

RAY SCHEY: Who is part of the care team that you implemented in your workplace and what talking is shared with privacy?

PEGGY CHASE: When we first started doing the care teams, we did that with leaders in the company. We did look for somebody who was a clinician. In our current care teams, we do have a clinician on the care teams. We also have

other people who are compassionate serving on the care teams. One of the things that we found was when somebody was in a challenging situation, or when all of a sudden, there would be a loss of life at one of our sites from a patient or something to that effect, is that being able to send in a team, being trained around caring, around listening and that compassion side were most important

It was really about being a good listener. It's more listening than it is talking. And then, remember, and within team building, a lot of times, it really does start with an element of fun. Fun can take many forms. It can be just asking that question where you're learning something different about somebody, that even though you've known them for years, you didn't know that about them.

What a great environment right now, to even do icebreakers around pets or around homeschooling kids, or all types of things that can bring people together around some



yes, we also have had licensed clinicians on the team, but they might be just with one person and you might have eight people involved in the situation. So, you've got people who are not licensed clinicians as well having the conversations with them, sharing resources and where to go and that type of thing. But we did use quite a few of the mindfulness strategies because a lot of times when people are going through a situation, they are anxious in the moment. So, helping them to calm down and to be able to really speak was important. There is a lot of training to do those types of things that I would be happy to share.

RAY SCHEY: What are the signs of a good counselor versus a bad counselor? Somebody had a friend that went to one and stopped going because they felt that there was very little to no interaction. They just had the patient talk but didn't offer any advice.

steven sheets: This really comes down to personal approach. And so, what may be perceived as a bad counselor might be a great counselor for another person. Years ago, I remembered a statistic that I always share. It said that about 33% of the people you work with, you're going to be really effective with. That may sound like a really low and horrible number, although if I was batting and 33% of the time hitting a home run, I'd be a multimillionaire. If we look at it and say, "Then if I'm not effective, there needs to be transparency back and forth between the client and the therapist, so that we can get somebody who's a better fit."

And so, rather than just saying, "I don't want to go anymore," it probably would be better to say, "I'm not sure you and I are a good fit. Can you help me find somebody else that aligns with me?" From a counseling perspective, I'd rather have clients tell me that they don't want to work with me, and then I can help them get with somebody that they want to work with a little bit more effectively, than just come into a session and feel like it's not even beneficial for either side.

RAY SCHEY: As companies and people start returning to the workplace, do you have any suggestions on some culture and team-building activities and things that the leadership can implement to be able to help bring people back together and rebuild some culture? Anything that you've done or anything you've heard of that companies are doing that's help to reengage their staff or employees?

PEGGY CHASE: I'm really going to go back to this because fun is something that does need to occur in the workplace. It's important. Several of us at Terros Health created care packages for our employees during the pandemic, and with the care packages, we made sure that there was fun during that time when people couldn't be together. That's something important to

common topics. That's one of the real keys, is connection, and connection doesn't start just with talking about the work. It really is recognizing people as people and developing those connections. I recommend starting with some elements of fun, and there are so many ways that that can be done.

RAY SCHEY: What are some actionable incentives that a company can implement to assist employees in managing their burnout or their stress?

JUSTIN BAYLESS: I'm a believer that work-life balance is an older thought process. It's really around work-life priority. What we've really tried to think about is how do we give people the flexibility using technology now to be on when they need to be on but give themselves a chance to reset. We now have that with the hybrid world of being able to go in office and work from home. We have

a lot of people who have kids or dependents and working from home has actually made it easier for them and be able to focus without having to get in their car and drive and traffic and all of those things. Employers and groups should really start to think about their worklife environment.

What does that look like for certain departments, right? Certain functions. How do you make it so that you work with your leaders within those divisions to find out what is ultimately going to be most attractive work setting for different departments? Because certain things you do need to have an office. Certain things can be at home, certain things could be hybrid. That is really attractive to a certain subset of the population in thinking about, what is it that really drives them intrinsically to produce? How do you think about getting rid of the normal 9-to-5, Monday through Friday? That right now is a huge opportunity for employers to take a really deep dive into understanding what your employees want from an actual work life priority and thinking

PEGGY CHASE: I think we've all realized here recently that we've moved into an employee-centric workplace. I think about the real estate market, right now we're actually in a sellers' market. There's not a lot of homes left for buyers. We're all in the same situation right now with employees. We were in an employer market forever, where the employer could drive it. We have moved into an employee market where we all need more employees, and they're being very selective about where they are going to work. And so, being able to put in place flexibilities is critical for all employers.



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Valleywise Health was proud to sponsor this special panel discussion, "Mental Health in the Workplace", and showcase the expertise of psychiatrist Dr. Alicia Cowdrey as we all work to further destignatize mental health.

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