

# mind by maple

CONNECTED HEALTHCARE

Mental health is a personal journey: how to support your team no matter which stage of life they're in



Though we've made significant progress in increasing awareness and understanding of mental health issues and their negative impact on physical health, mental illness remains a leading cause of disability in Canada.

According to the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#), 500,000 Canadians in any given week are unable to work due to mental health problems and 70% of disability costs can be attributed to mental illness. Poor mental health in the workplace also incurs indirect costs related to absenteeism, presenteeism, or challenges for recruitment and retention. Making matters worse, concerns around stigma and discrimination can make employees more hesitant to discuss mental health at work, which in turn may prevent them from getting the help they need.

For Canadian companies, the data speaks for itself, which is why more and more organizations are now committed to improving employee mental health as a whole. Simply put, focusing on the mental well-being of their employees can help companies thrive, save costs, and improve productivity at work. For example, a [Mckinsey survey](#) showed that workers who experienced declines in their mental health were five times more likely to report taking on reduced responsibility at work. Moreover, studies indicate that employees who struggle with depression are [20 to 40% more likely](#) to become unemployed.

For HR leaders, employee mental health represents a tremendous opportunity, but also a complex challenge, as mental health issues tend to resist a one-size-fits-all approach. So how can HR leaders provide impactful programs through employee benefits that truly move the needle when it comes to mental health?

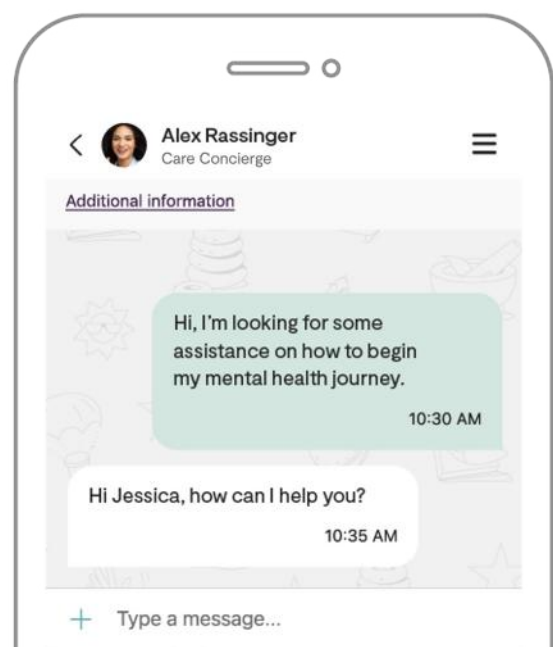
Here's why HR leaders should recognize that mental health is a personal journey and seek to offer flexible solutions that truly empower employees, no matter which stage of life they're in.

## Why mental health is a personal journey

To quote the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, "The only journey is the journey within." First, it's important to acknowledge that no two employees are exactly alike or going through life exactly the same way. Different life stages bring different hardships, and employees often have to tap into their inner resilience and adaptive skills to meet the new challenges that life has thrown their way. On any given day at work, some employees can be experiencing the joys of parenthood for the first time while others may be having relationship issues or grieving the loss of a beloved family member. Mental health is, therefore, unique to each individual and always in flux. As such, we should think of mental health as a personal journey rather than merely a way to cure symptoms.

Moreover, we should recognize that mental health and physical health are highly intertwined. A long-standing physical health problem can have negative repercussions on mental health, and vice-versa. This is why we at Maple believe that the most effective way to support employee mental health is through holistic, whole-person care, which helps employees with their physical, mental, and specialty healthcare needs.

Employees can use Maple to consult a wide range of providers. They can chat with a General Practitioner for advice about their physical health, see a Canadian-license therapist for mental health support, or receive specialty care from a wide range of specialists, including dermatologists, naturopaths, endocrinologists, and more. In other words, Maple is a one-stop solution for a whole-person approach to care, with true continuity of care across the continuum.



But what does this mean in practice? It means our platform supports employees and their loved ones regardless of where they are in life. Here are a few examples:



## Liam, 5 years old

Liam's mother has access to Maple through her employer. One night, Liam wakes up crying at 2am, holding his ear in pain. His mother logs onto Maple and sees a General Practitioner online, who quickly provides Liam a prescription for earache medication. The problem is resolved quickly, and both Liam and his mother are able to go back to sleep. The next day at work, Liam's mother isn't too affected by the incident, as the problem was resolved quickly and she didn't have to spend all night waiting in an emergency room. She doesn't have to worry about Liam, helping her focus at work. A quick resolution also prevented unnecessary stress that could have affected her mental health.



## Camilla, 20 years old

Having recently entered the workforce, Camilla now has access to Maple through her employee benefits. She has questions about her sexual health that she has never felt comfortable asking her family physician in person, or even discussing with friends or family members. Through Maple, Camilia is able to speak with a General Practitioner via secure, private text messages, a discreet consultation option that allows her to ask questions and receive answers without fearing judgment. Camilia's issue is resolved before it worsens. Before ending the consultation, Camilia's doctor recommends consulting a mental health therapist for further support, letting her know that mental health therapy is available on Maple. Investigating this further, Camilia sees that Maple can pair her with a therapist specialized in gender and sexuality issues, which encourages her to schedule her first appointment.



## Katie, 30 years old

A new mother, Katie is experiencing issues with breastfeeding and postpartum depression. Struggling to find the help she needs, she remembers receiving an email in her work inbox informing her she had access to mental health therapy sessions through Mind by Maple. Unsure how to get started, she logs onto the platform and speaks with a Care Concierge via private text messages. The Care Concierge recommends a specific therapist for her needs and informs her that she can also use Maple to see a lactation consultant online. Katie had no idea it was possible to see this type of specialist online, but she likes how this makes it possible for her to speak with a professional from the comfort of her home, so she decides to schedule an appointment. After an initial consultation and a second follow-up visit, the breastfeeding issue is resolved and stops affecting Katie in different spheres of her life. Meanwhile, recurring sessions with a mental health therapist also helps Katie with postpartum depression as she navigates this new stage of life.



## David, 54 years old

David has been working for the same company for over 20 years. Recently, he's noticed that younger talents are getting promoted, making him feel undervalued. He often wonders if the company still cares about him or if his best days are now behind him. After recognizing in himself symptoms of depression, he decides he needs to talk about these feelings with a professional. Fortunately, his company provides him access to unlimited psychotherapy consultations through Maple. Instead of spending hours searching for a psychotherapist who's accepting new patients, David simply logs onto the app and chooses a Canadian-licensed psychotherapist from the list of available counsellors. Over the course of multiple sessions, the therapist helps David examine the true roots of his feelings. David starts feeling better about himself and his role at the company, helping him ace an important new project. Eventually, he receives the promotion he had been coveting.



## Sandra, 85 years old

Sandra is a relatively healthy 85-year-old woman who's living with her daughter and granddaughter. Lately, Sandra has been experiencing sharp pain in her back, preventing her from performing her usual daily activities and causing her daughter to worry about her while she's away at work during the day. Since Sandra's daughter has access to Maple through her company, Sandra decides to use the platform to get medical advice from a Canadian-licensed General Practitioner. After conversing with Sandra and asking many questions, the doctor decides to write her a prescription for a muscle relaxant and also recommends consulting a mental health therapist for further support. Meanwhile, Sandra's daughter decides she needs more support to help her care for her aging mother's physical and mental and health needs. Logging onto Maple, she schedules an appointment with an online caregiver coach.

## How a return to the office will impact mental health

Numerous companies have started getting ready to welcome their employees back to the office. Change is never easy to navigate, and though most employees will rejoice at the idea of once again being able to share physical space with their colleagues, many team members will also understandably worry about being accidentally exposed to COVID-19. Employees may also worry about losing the sense of autonomy they gained while working remotely during the pandemic.

Your team will most likely want reassurance that it's physically safe to return to the office and that the company is taking all necessary precautionary measures. They

may inquire about air quality or ventilation, or if the frequency of cleaning has been increased. Some team members may have concerns about transmitting the virus to an at-risk family member at home or children who are too young to be vaccinated. For this reason, you should expect plenty of questions from parents and caregivers, who may view this return to work differently than employees without children. Here again, which stage of life your employees are in can make a big difference in how they experience a return to the office.

To resolve these issues, make sure you establish and roll out a clear and effective communications plan that tells employees everything they need they know and who to contact should they have further questions. Furthermore, you should continue to emphasize flexibility by making accommodations for certain employees and providing additional time off, flexible work schedules, and hybrid work arrangements if needed. Be willing to give employees some breathing room to figure out what works best for them, with the expectation that further adjustments can be made down the road.

Across your organization, make sure your leaders model the desired behaviours for your employees. If your workplace offers a hybrid schedule to facilitate work-life balance, managers can show everyone on their team that it's perfectly acceptable to take advantage of this policy by taking advantage of it themselves.

Lastly, make sure to demonstrate to employees that your company values mental well-being and that there's no need to fear stigma. Beyond impactful employee programs, one of the best things organizations can do for mental health is to create a work environment that's truly open and encourages everyone to be fully themselves. To accomplish this,

organizations can provide mental health literacy training and robust mental health benefits to all employees, train leaders and managers to help them identify and proactively address signs of distress, and discourage behaviour that discriminates against mental health issues.

Committing to using non stigmatizing language across all communications (Employing terms like “substance-use disorder” instead of “addiction”, for example) and encouraging leaders to share some of their own struggles with mental health can also help foster a culture of psychological wellness in your organization. Lastly, organizations should communicate to employees that mental wellness is critical for peak performance. As such, an employee working themselves to exhaustion at the expense of rest and renewal should not be praised. Rather, employees should be reminded of the workplace supports available to them for their mental, physical, and social health needs to help them achieve a healthy and balanced lifestyle.



If you have any questions about how to best implement an impactful mental health program in your organization, contact us at [sales@getmaple.ca](mailto:sales@getmaple.ca) and we'll be happy to assist you, or visit [getmaple.ca/business](https://getmaple.ca/business).

