

Well-Being at Work



Well-being is an enduring state of the whole person at work, including physical wellness, cognitive support, and psychological comfort. Organizations with strategies that incorporate health and well-being into their culture enjoy more success. Culture is directly related to engagement—truly engaged employees are far more likely to be creative and perform better. By providing work environments that holistically affect the well-being of their workforce, organizations can expect people to be healthier and more engaged, ultimately leading to higher organizational performance.

Through our research, we've identified three important topics that affect well-being in the workplace: Affordances, resilience, and movement.

Affordances

The characteristics of an object or space that encourage a particular behavior. Affordances are divided into three distinct but interrelated categories: cognitive, emotional, and physical.

Resilience

Work stress can contribute to burnout and vice versa—creating a vicious cycle that amplifies both. To support resilient employees organizations should address workers' needs for optimal health and performance.

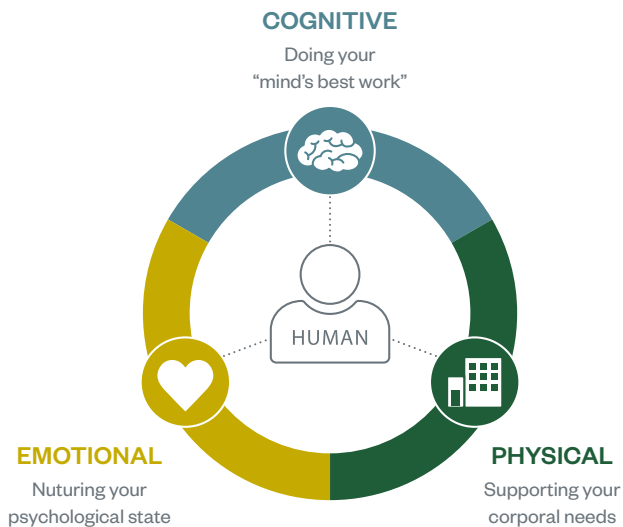
Movement

As humans, we are made to move. Ultimately, the best posture, position, or location is the next one. Our well-being benefits when we fuel our body with activity to counter sedentary work.

35%
of Americans reported
chronic work-related
stress

Affordances and Space Design

Our studies have identified 10 core Affordances—the characteristics of an object or space that encourage a particular behavior. They are divided into three distinct but interrelated categories: cognitive, emotional, and physical. When applied appropriately, they help create the conditions that allow people to do their best work.



Cognitive

Help people do their mind's best work. These Affordances support intellectual activities such as thinking, problem solving, or remembering.

Put into practice: Offer multiple types of access.

- Making sure employees having the right access to people both virtually and physically in the new hybrid world.
- Provide the right tools, physical or digital, to help them stay connected wherever they work.

Emotional

Nurture a person's psychological state. These Affordances support emotional feelings—such as fulfilled, engaged, happy, safe—that come from being in a space.

Put into practice: Create legible office space.

- Legible workspace increases performance and reduces stress—especially for people's ability to focus at work.
- Designing the layout of the floorplan so it is easy to understand helps people to see and find each other easily.
- The design of workspaces should clearly convey their intended use. For instance, is this a social space or a workspace?

Physical

Support the body's needs. These Affordances provide the right physiological fit for each person's unique needs.

Put into practice: Offer adjustable furnishings and adaptable spaces.

- Providing solutions and spaces that encourage people to change posture, position, and location based on their work activity reinforces an organizational focus on employee well-being.

Affordances enable organizations to unlock the potential of space design and human performance to enhance well-being, leading to healthier, engaged employees—wherever they work.

“The concept of affordances, developed by the psychologist James Gibson, explains how an object or an environment communicates its purpose and offers possibilities for action.”

Jeff Reuschel

Haworth Global Director of Design & Innovation, Emeritus

Resilience

Our research on resilience in the workplace shows that organizations that put measures in place to buffer workplace stressors and foster stress recovery can help prevent burnout. They'll get the added benefit of supporting resilience for the whole workforce. Employers who provide the right resources to address their employees' emotional and physical well-being will build a more resilient workforce—with the ability to “bounce back” from adverse conditions and stress. Consider these five resources that can be applied to space design to buffer employees from stress and burnout.



Ambient Qualities

Controlled noise levels, daylight access, healthy air quality, comfortable temperature, inviting aesthetics, connection to nature/greenery



Legibility

Smart plan configurations and wayfinding with landmarks, visual access, architectural differentiation, and signage



Accessibility of Coworkers

Appropriate proximity and ease of interaction with coworkers—in person and virtually



Culture

Design, leadership, and “lived” values that promote trust and transparency



User Control

Elements adapt to the user and/or activity, such as height-adjustable tables, adjustable ergonomic task seating, lighting, orientation/placement of workspace, screens

Movement

Our research and understanding of workplace Affordances tell us that a person's well-being functions as an interconnected system. When a person feels strong emotionally, they tend to manage the stressors of everyday life and recover more quickly—oftentimes leading to an ability to cognitively process information better. Additionally, physical activity has been shown to reduce depression, boost the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin levels—all of which affect focus and attention.

- Posture involves training your body to sit, stand, walk, and lie in positions where the least strain is placed on supporting muscles and ligaments. Good posture helps to apply the appropriate amounts of pressure on our joints and ligaments by maintaining correct amounts of muscle tension.
- Position change involves moving from seated to standing or vice versa. It's a significant shift in the body's weight distribution. Position change helps improve blood circulation, reduces swelling, and enhances musculoskeletal comfort.
- Location involves walking (or skipping or jogging or whatever suits you) to a different place. Changing location stimulates cognition, creates opportunity for connection with others, and reduces the potential for musculoskeletal disorders associated with long-term static postures.

A simple step that both employees and employers can focus on to enhance an individual's well-being is movement. Fostering activities that support workers cognitive, emotional, and physical needs leads to a culture of well-being, which can lead to higher employee engagement and organizational success.

Want to learn more?

For more in-depth information and inspiration on our future office space, please contact your local Haworth sales representative.