



THE RESILIENT ORGANIZATION:

Navigating Challenges and Thriving in Uncertainty



Organizational resilience

Organizational resilience focuses on the employees that a workplace relies on for success. While all parts of business resilience are important, it's easy to overlook the people part when business pressures build. It can be a challenge to focus on employee health when financial, operational and technological concerns loom.

However, organizations that lose their focus on employee well-being risk negative impacts in the short- and long-term. These include challenges with productivity, absence and retention. And these all impact the bottom line. Resilience is fostered by

organizational policies and procedures and ability to adapt to the needs of employees. That's why we've focussed this guide on organizational resilience through the lens of organizational health and resilient employees.

Employers are uniquely positioned to help employees build personal resilience. By providing a supportive environment and resources, they can help employees learn how to better handle stress, stay healthy, and maintain productivity. This benefits both employees and organizations as a whole, leading to a more robust and adaptable workforce.

What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to adapt or change when things don't go as we expected them to – like when we experience ongoing pressures, uncertainty and change. It involves being able to bounce back from difficult situations.



When you fall, do you get back up, and how quickly?



Current threats to employee resilience

There are several trends that are currently testing the resilience of many employees.



Increase in chronic disease rates.

Almost half (45.1%) of Canadians live with at least one major chronic disease.¹ For diabetes alone, Diabetes Canada predicts a 26% increase in incidence from 2023 to 2033. And our ground-breaking 2024 [research study](#) on chronic disease revealed an even more worrying trend. Canadians are getting chronic conditions at younger ages. If not properly managed, chronic disease can negatively impact employee health resilience.



Continued rise in mental health issues.

In recent years, employers have made progress in raising mental health awareness in Canadian workplaces. Many have also provided greater access to mental health care. However, employee mental health remains a key challenge facing many Canadian workplaces. Based on our Sun Life data, mental health issues now account for almost 40% of all long-term disability claims.



Social disconnection.

According to Benefits Canada, 38% of Canadian plan members reported experiencing loneliness, isolation, or social disconnection. 47% of those reporting poor social health reported high levels of daily stress.² It's not just mental health that's affected. At age 50, relationship satisfaction is a better predictor than cholesterol levels of physical health at age 80.³



Economic instability.

The increasing economic instability around the world has far-reaching effects that extend into the workplace, significantly impacting employee resilience. This instability can manifest in various ways, such as supply chain disruptions and market volatility. Consequently, employees may experience heightened anxiety about job security, finances and increased workloads as companies adapt to changing circumstances, and the need to rapidly acquire new skills to remain competitive in a shifting landscape. The constant state of flux demands greater mental and emotional fortitude from workers, challenging their ability to maintain focus, productivity, and overall well-being. Organizations that recognize this impact and proactively support their employees through mental health manager training, clear communication, and flexible work policies are better positioned to weather the storms and maintain a resilient, adaptable workforce.

Burnout

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when we feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

Signs of burnout can manifest in various ways: physically, individuals may feel tired, drained, and experience changes in sleep patterns or appetite; emotionally, they may struggle with self-doubt, feelings of failure, loss of motivation, and cynicism; behaviorally, burnout can lead to withdrawing from others, isolating oneself, procrastinating, and increased irritability.

To combat burnout and strengthen resilience, it's important to increase socialization, reach out to others for support, limit exposure to negative people, and engage in meaningful activities, including giving to others. Additionally, seeking value in work, maintaining a healthy balance, taking breaks, and setting boundaries are crucial steps in preventing and recovering from burnout.

It's also important to remember that sometimes burnout results from external factors beyond one's control.



The power of employee resilience

Resilient employees boost productivity, reduce absences, and stay with their employer longer.⁴ It's a quality that can be developed and strengthened through consistent effort and support. By regularly practicing resilience-building techniques, employees can enhance their ability to cope with challenges and setbacks.

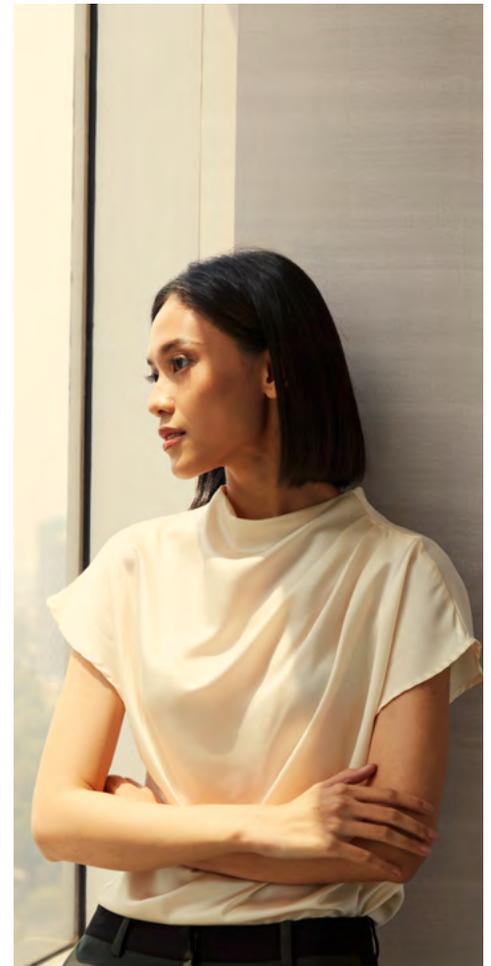
While there are many types of resilience, two types in particular can impact the workplace:



Emotional/psychological resilience is how an employee responds to stress and adversity and adapts mentally to uncertainty and challenges. A resilient employee can leverage optimism while remaining realistic about the situation. This lets them manage stress and emotion in a way that's positive and healthy.



Physical resilience is about the body's ability to adapt to challenges and maintain health. This type of resilience is relevant when it comes to recovering from physical illness, injury or accidents.



In general, resilient people:

1. Frame difficulty as a challenge.

They look at failure as a growth opportunity, not a reflection of their own self-worth.

2. Feel a commitment to key life areas.

They have a sense of purpose, and are committed not just to work, but to other areas of life. This might include relationships or causes they're passionate about.

3. Understand the limits on what they can control.

They understand what is and what isn't in their personal control. This lets them focus on what they can control, and not worry about what they can't.



There are five attributes that many psychologists view as being foundational for building resilience:

Attribute	What you can do as an employer
<p>1. Social connections.</p> <p>Having strong social connections can help people navigate challenging times. It's also a crucial part of maintaining good mental and overall health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach • Employee Resource Groups
<p>2. Purpose.</p> <p>Having a purpose refers to both big things (like a job) and smaller things (like walking the dog). A strong purpose and meaning helps build resilience. It helps people feel a part of something greater than themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills training • Career planning • Performance management goal-setting
<p>3. Health and wellness.</p> <p>Staying healthy and focusing on wellness is fundamental to building resilience. This includes a focus on sleep, exercise and good nutrition. It's important to be aware of when we're feeling rundown and need to pay attention to our self-care such as getting more rest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness initiatives • Regular promotion of group benefits coverage
<p>4. Healthy thoughts.</p> <p>Being able to turn negative thought processes into healthy thoughts is foundational to building resilience. It takes practice, but it works. The human brain is adaptable and can rewire itself to change negative self-talk into more productive thoughts. This includes challenging and examining our negative thoughts and acknowledging what we can and can't control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching on reframing and problem-solving in the workplace such as using internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy (iCBT) • On-site meditation or yoga
<p>5. Seeking help.</p> <p>Being able to identify when you need help is a sign of resilience (strength) and not a weakness. It may seem counter-intuitive, but a resilient person will seek help sooner rather than later.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular promotion of group benefits coverage • Manager mental health training to help support employees and teams



Manager mental health training

Mental health training for managers is crucial in today's workplace environment. As the first line of support for employees, managers play a vital role in promoting mental well-being and identifying potential issues before they escalate. Proper training equips managers with the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of mental health struggles, have supportive conversations, and guide team

members to appropriate resources. Managers who understand mental health can better accommodate employees' needs, reduce workplace stress, and improve overall productivity and job satisfaction. In an era where burnout and anxiety are increasingly common, organizations that prioritize mental health training for managers demonstrate a commitment to their employees.



You can find videos on our website about uncovering the truth about mental health, specific disorders and the role managers play in supporting the mental health of their teams.

[Manager mental health training videos](#)



Don't forget..

While effective leaders prioritize the mental health and well-being of their team members, it's equally crucial that they don't neglect to take care of themselves. Leaders often face unique pressures and stressors, including decision-making responsibilities, conflict resolution, and the weight of guiding others through challenges. By tending to their own mental health, leaders not only ensure their personal well-being but also model healthy behaviours for their team. This self-care enables leaders to maintain resilience, clarity

of thought, and emotional stability, which are essential for making sound decisions and providing consistent support to their teams. Moreover, a leader who prioritizes their own mental health is better equipped to recognize and address mental health concerns within their team, creating a more empathetic and supportive work environment. Ultimately, a leader's commitment to their own mental health contributes to a positive cycle of well-being that benefits the entire organization.

Lean on your benefits plan

Your core group benefits plan may include supports you can communicate to employees such as coverage for mental health practitioners. In addition, virtual care services provide convenient access to medical professionals and resources. This includes telemedicine consultations, online prescription renewals, and digital health management tools.

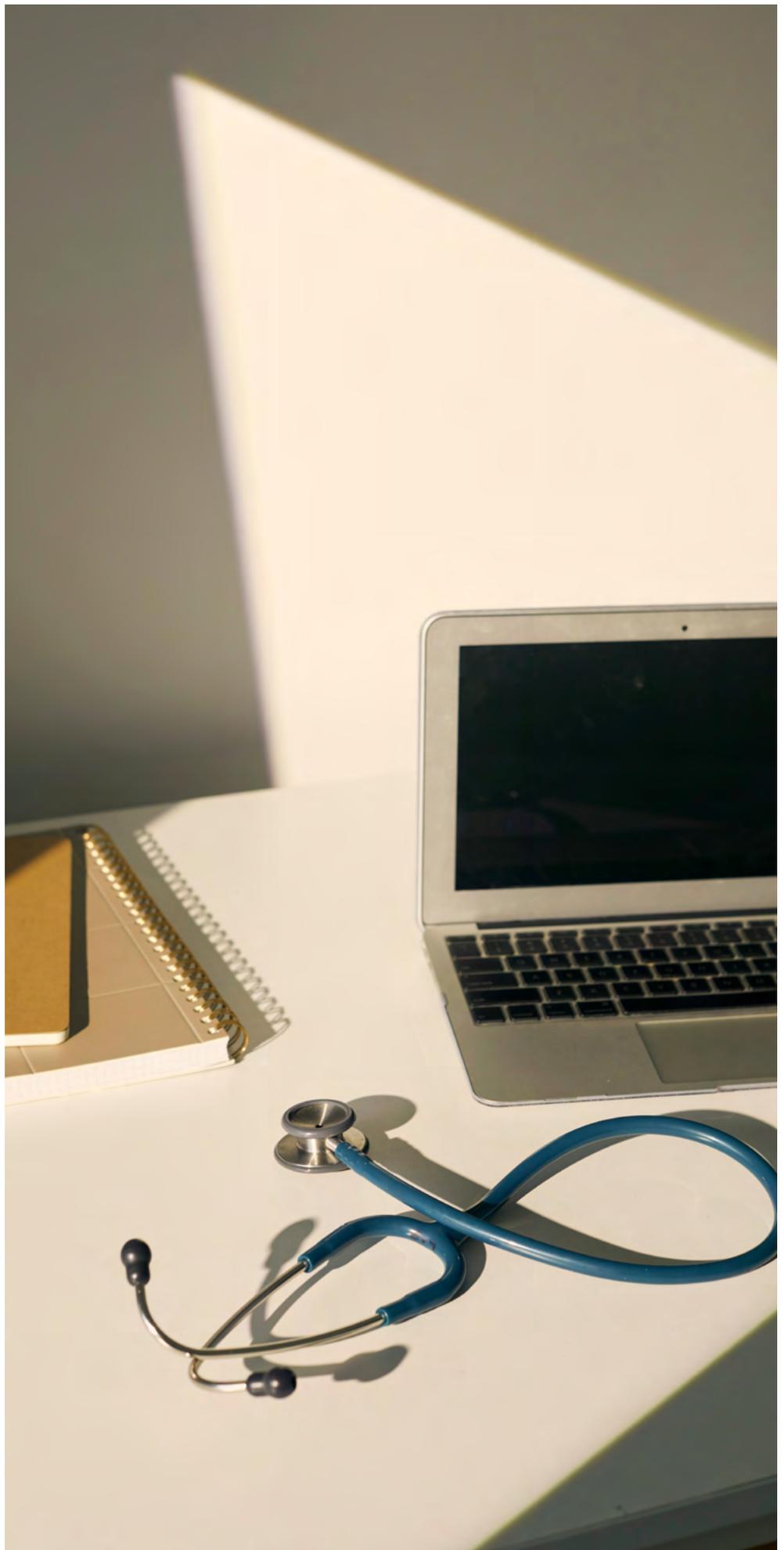
Another key component of a benefits offering is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This confidential service provides covered employees and their eligible dependents with professional counseling, resources, and support for a wide range of personal and work-related issues, including workplace support for people managers. Whether you're dealing with stress, relationship problems, financial concerns, or need legal advice, the EAP is available 24/7 to offer guidance and support.

Flexible health and personal spending accounts, allow you to allocate funds for eligible health-related expenses not covered by your core plan, enhancing access to health and wellness solutions. You may also want to consider implementing employer-driven initiatives that could be helpful, such as:

- Wellness programs and incentives
- Regular communication by people leaders to their teams about their benefits and how to access them is important. This can be in team meetings, emails or in 1:1 conversations.



To learn more, talk to your advisor, consultant or Sun Life representative.





Take action on organizational resilience

Poor resilience on an individual employee level can weaken overall business resilience. Productivity can decline, absence and associated costs can increase, and the retention of valuable employees can suffer.

There are many solutions that can help. Resilience isn't static – and all employees can learn, train and further develop it. Whether someone is naturally resilient or not, they can build their resilience over time. Resilience

truly is a muscle that people can use and grow.

Investing time and effort in enhancing staff wellness and adaptability can lead to significant long-term benefits for the organization.

Sunlife.ca/groupbenefits

1 Statistics Canada, Health of Canadians, 2023

2 Benefits Canada 2024 Health Survey

3 Waldinger, 2015

4 Shatté A, Perlman A, Smith B, Lynch WD. The Positive Effect of Resilience on Stress and Business Outcomes in Difficult Work Environments. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2017 Feb;59(2):135-140. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000000914. PMID: 28002352; PMCID: PMC5287440.

Life's brighter under the sun

Group Benefits are provided by Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, a member of the Sun Life group of companies. MC1181 04-25 ad-na

