

Monthly Well-Being Theme Resources Guide For August 2022

This Resources Guide focuses on IWIL's August 2022 Well-Being Theme: Leading Well-Being. The focus is on how organizational and supervisory level leaders can protect and promote mental well-being for their teams, themselves, and their organizations. Thanks to everyone who contributed to it and the accompanying [31-Day Leading Well-Being Calendar](#): Jeannette Boot, Anne Brafford, Jordana Confino, Brandy Wilson Edwards, Casey Fairchild, Carl Ficks, Tracy Kepler, and Loretta Oleksy.



HOW DO LEADERS PROTECT & PROMOTE WELL-BEING?

**Contributor: Anne Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD
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Leaders at all levels impact workplace well-being. Supervisory-level leaders with the most direct and frequent contact with employees have a particularly important role. They have the biggest influence on employees' daily work experience—good or bad. As to mental health, supervisors powerfully impact employees through:

- ✦ Their leadership styles as they interact with individuals and teams
- ✦ Their contributions to a psychologically healthy work culture
- ✦ Effective, empathetic management of mental health issues on their teams, and
- ✦ Support for workplace well-being programs.

Supervisor support impacts not only employees' well-being but also performance, engagement, experience of inclusion, job satisfaction, and retention. Bad leadership does just the opposite. It's linked, for example, to depression, anxiety, burnout, and alcohol use.

» **WHO IS A LEADER? YOU (PROBABLY) ARE.**

For our purposes, all senior lawyers (including all law firm partners) and staff managers are leaders—whether or not they have formal titles or

recognize themselves as leaders. Anyone who is responsible for supervising and motivating others has a leadership role.

» **YOU CAN'T OPT OUT OF YOUR IMPACT.**

Partners and other senior organizational members are especially impactful leaders because employees watch them closely for what's valued and expected and whether they're valued and respected. High status bestows this influence and impact. *There's no opting out.* Leadership scholars Karina Nielsen and Kevin Daniel (2012) summed it up like this:

“Leaders cannot escape responsibility of communicating meaning because their behaviors and interpretations become events that followers interpret.”

Because leaders so strongly influence whether lawyers and professional staff have energizing or draining work experiences, ignoring leader development will hinder (if not doom) well being initiatives.

But leaders' busy schedules often make it hard to find time for education and experimenting with new behaviors. Luckily, there are many do-able strategies for leaders to support mental health at work, no matter your job title or schedule.



A PRACTICAL THEORY FOR LEADING WELL-BEING: SDT

How might you get started on developing as a well-being-supporting leader without feeling overwhelmed? Consider approaching it with bite-sized learning and behaviors that can fit within your current routine.

A framework for doing so is called *self-determination theory* (“SDT.” Sorry for the stiff name. No one consulted me!) SDT has been described variously as a theory of motivation, well-being, and flourishing. It explains the social conditions and psychological processes that are necessary for well-being, vitality, motivation, and social integration. A major part of SDT is its emphasis on satisfying fundamental psychological needs for connection, competence, and autonomy (discussed more below).

Studies in the legal profession demonstrate SDT’s importance for buffering against burnout, promoting engagement, and/or protecting and promoting well-being:

✦ **Fostering Well-Being & Engagement By Supporting SDT Needs.** Studies of practicing lawyers have found that experiencing fulfillment of SDT’s psychological needs and having need-supportive supervisors are positively associated with well-being and engagement and negatively associated with lawyers’ intent to leave ([Brafford, 2017](#); [Krieger & Sheldon, 2015](#)). Studies of law students have found similar benefits (e.g., Sheldon & Krieger, [2004](#), [2007](#)).

✦ **Caring Employers Buffer Against Burnout.** IWIL’s 2021 engagement-burnout study of lawyers and staff found that people’s perceptions that their employer cares about their well-being was positively related to engagement and negatively related to burnout. (The IWIL survey findings are summarized [here](#) at page 6; statistical findings appear in [IWIL conference slides found here](#)).

✦ **Humanistic Work Cultures.** A study of U.S. lawyers found that [feeling valued](#) for one’s professional talent/skill or overall human worth rather than primarily for billable hours, productivity, and responsiveness was associated with mental and physical health ([Krill et al., 2022](#)). Similarly, perceiving that one’s firm culture excessively emphasizes profits and competitiveness correlates with depressive symptoms ([Bergin & Jimmieson, 2013](#), Australia lawyers). On the other hand, feeling motivated to work by intrinsic values (such as growth, connection, community, or altruism) as opposed to extrinsic values (such as for affluence, status, fame, and appearance) is associated with well-being among lawyers ([Krieger & Sheldon, 2015](#)).

Integrating SDT into how you interact at work is one powerful way to actively show you care about your team’s well-being and that you value them as people, not just as fee-generators.

Check Out The Cheat Sheet

Take a quick look at some recommended SDT need-supporting behaviors in this [Cheat Sheet](#). More resources are recommended below.

>> What Are Psychological Needs?

Hopefully, you’re now feeling desperate to know more about this SDT thing. At the heart of SDT “is the idea that humans have certain innate psychological needs, the satisfaction of which is essential for human wellness, growth, and sense of meaningfulness” (Martela et al., 2021).

SDT proposes that we all are naturally and intrinsically motivated toward growth and optimal functioning. But that inclination may be blocked or unlocked by our ability to fill up on four psychological nutrients:

✦ **RELATEDNESS:** Feeling cared for and a sense of belonging in groups that matter to us.

- ✦ **COMPETENCE:** Feeling effective and able to grow.
- ✦ **AUTONOMY:** Feeling a sense of volition (that our behaviors are self-endorsed) and authenticity (able to act in alignment with our values and interests and express ourselves).
- ✦ **POSITIVE IMPACT:** A sense of having a positive impact in the lives of other people.

Work contexts that help satisfy these psychological needs will support employees in feeling and being their best.

>> What Are The Benefits?

Hundreds of workplace studies have found significant beneficial relationships (sometimes quite large) between SDT and outcomes we all care about:

Negative relationships have been found with:

Depression	Anxiety	Burnout
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Positive relationships have been found with:

Engagement	Resilience	Creativity
Well-Being	Vitality	Helping Others
Inclusion	Self-Esteem	Voice
Meaningful Work	Optimism	Psychological Safety
Retention	Proactivity	Perceived Fairness
Positive Affect	Job Satisfaction	
	Performance	



STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING NEED-SATISFACTION AT WORK

Contributors: Anne Brafford, IWIL Vice President, and Jordana Confino, Founder of JC Coaching & Consulting.

Incorporating SDT-based interpersonal behaviors into our everyday work interactions can contribute to work climates that support well-being and all the other benefits that flow from need-satisfaction. Below are some resources that provide guidance for doing so:

- ✦ The free [Cheat Sheet](#) of SDT need-supportive behaviors is probably the handiest resource of them all. It summarizes SDT's psychological needs and has a table of specific supervisor behaviors to support them.
- ✦ A Law360 article from January 2022 that summarizes IWIL's burnout/engagement study and recommends supervisor strategies based on SDT that align with those findings: [Supervisor Relationships Are Key To Beating Attorney Burnout](#) by Anne Brafford.
- ✦ A paper with more detail about applying SDT to support workplace well-being: [Effective Leaders: The Linchpin of Workplace Well-Being](#) by Anne Brafford.
- ✦ A paper that explains the interrelationships among well-being, inclusion, and engagement, and how SDT need-support can contribute to them all: [Engagement, Inclusion, & Well-Being: The Intertwined Trifecta of Positive Work Experience](#) by Anne Brafford.
- ✦ A book written for law firm partners by a former law firm partner on how to apply SDT and other evidence-based approaches to cultivate work engagement: [Positive Professionals: Creating High-Performing Profitable Firms Through The Science of Engagement](#) by Anne Brafford.
- ✦ A short *Harvard Business Review* article with quick tips for supervisors about applying SDT to motivate their languishing teams: [3 Ways to Motivate Your Team Through an Extended Crisis](#) by Anne Brafford and Richard Ryan.
- ✦ A podcast episode by one of the leading experts applying SDT in workplaces: [Self-Determination Theory in the Post-Management Era](#) with guest Dr. Scott Rigby.
- ✦ [Short surveys](#) that measure employees' SDT need-satisfaction and extent to which they perceive their supervisors as need-supportive. You can use them for self-assessment or simply as a conversation tool.



OTHER SUPERVISOR PRACTICES FOR LEADING WELL-BEING

Contributors: Tracy Kepler, Risk Control Consulting Director at CNA and IWIL Secretary, and Brandy Wilson Edwards, Attorney and Motivational Speaker.

Below are more recommended resources from the IWIL team for leaders to protect and promote workers' well-being.

✦ **The IWIL 31-Day Leading Well-Being Challenge.** The IWIL team has created a handy [calendar of 31 ideas](#) for all of you supervisory leaders to support your team's and your own well-being. Many thanks to the contributors to the Calendar: **Anne Brafford, Brandy Wilson Edwards, Casey Fairchild, Kate Manning, and Loretta Oleksy.**

✦ **Get To Know Them.** To be effective and inclusive, you should tailor your support to the needs of your diverse team members. That means you'll need to get to know their needs better. How can we do that proactively and tactfully? This article gives some guidance: [The Secret to Becoming a Better Manager](#), Harvard Business Review.

✦ **Practice Empathy.**

- How leaders can show empathy at work during a collective trauma and curb burnout: [How to Lead Your Exhausted Team](#), Forbes.
- Leader empathy is essential for supporting workplace well-being and helping your team perform in difficult times: [Empathy Is The Most Important Leadership Skill According To Research](#), Forbes: *"Leaders don't have to be experts in mental health in order to demonstrate they care and are paying attention. It's enough to check in, ask questions and take cues from the employee about how much they want to share."*
- Katharine Manning's book [The Empathetic Workplace](#) gives step-by-step guidance for practicing empathy at work.

- **Tips for Supporting Mental Health: 8 Ways Managers Can Support Employees' Mental Health**, Harvard Business Review.



LEADING WELL-BEING IN REMOTE/HYBRID WORK

Contributors: Casey Fairchild, Health & Welfare Benefits Manager at Perkins Coie LLP, and Brandy Wilson Edwards, Attorney and Motivational Speaker.

- ✦ [And Now, the Challenges of Managing a Hybrid Team](#) – Eric Schadt, The Digital Workplace
- ✦ [How Leaders Can Prioritize Well-Being In A Hybrid Workplace](#) - Chad Severson, Forbes
- ✦ [How to Create an Inclusive Hybrid Workplace: 5 Tips for Leaders](#) – Chandni Kazi, Great Place to Work®
- ✦ [Hybrid Communication Best Practices](#) – Katherine Boyarsky, Owl Labs
- ✦ [8 Best Strategies To Improve Remote Worker Employee Experience](#) – Liam Martin, Time Doctor
- ✦ [The Future of Hybrid Work: 5 Key Questions Answered With Data](#) – Ben Wigert, Gallup
- ✦ [The 3 Biggest Challenges of Hybrid Working \(and How to Overcome Them\)](#) – Timely Blog
- ✦ [How to Land Your Hybrid Work Policy](#) – Timely Blog
- ✦ This article and infographic explore leading well-being on hybrid work teams: [Hybrid Leadership - Employee Mental Wellbeing](#), by Karen Ferris.



LEADERS, PROTECT & PROMOTE YOUR OWN WELL-BEING

Contributor: Anne Brafford, IWIL Vice President.

Prioritize your own mental health so that you can be your best for others and bring out the best in them. When you're feeling stressed, sleep-deprived, depleted, and moody, it will be harder to meet your own needs and effectively lead.

One recommendation is to start (or continue) practices that bolster mindfulness and emotion regulation. Such practices can help you manage stress and satisfy your own basic needs (Brown & Ryan, 2015)—which can contribute to your own happiness and ability to be an effective leader.

Focus especially on building [psychological flexibility](#)—a self-regulation competency. Psychological flexibility is a key part of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (an extension of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)), which heavily influenced Dr. Susan David in her helpful book [Emotional Agility](#). She explains the concept as “being flexible with your thoughts and feelings so that you can respond optimally to everyday situations” (p. 5).

🌱 **Build Emotional Agility.** In addition to her book, Susan David also wrote a *Harvard Business Review* article called [Emotional Agility](#) that will introduce you to the approach. Shirza Chamine's book [Positive Intelligence](#) relies on the same science and also is helpful and entertaining. If you're ready to get serious about developing this competency, the workbook [Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life](#) by Steven Hayes & Spencer Smith will walk you through activities for doing so. Multiple studies have confirmed that this book is an effective self-help approach.

🌱 **Mindfulness.** Resources are ubiquitous for deepening our mindfulness through a meditation practice. A stand-out for lawyers is the book [The Anxious Lawyer](#) by Jeena Cho & Karen Gifford.

🌱 **Breathing Practices.** Simple breathing practices can calm our stress response. An IWIL [Activity Guide](#) with instructions for helpful practices can be found here.

🌱 **Prioritize Sleep.** [Leading well requires sleeping well.](#) When the boss isn't well-rested, everyone pays a price.



ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP THAT SUPPORTS WELL-BEING

Contributors: Jeannette Boot, Partner at WilmerHale; Anne Brafford, IWIL Vice President; Jordana Confino, Founder of JC Coaching & Consulting; Carl Ficks, Founder of No Surrender, LLC; Tracy Kepler, Risk Control Consulting Director at CNA and IWIL Secretary.

Much of the above focuses on supervisory leaders' support for well-being. Organizational leadership also plays an enormous role in workplace well-being through the policies, practices, norms, and work climate that it creates. Recommended resources are below.

🌱 **Build a Healthy Workplace.** Workplace psychosocial factors are things within employers' influence that can impact employees' health and optimal functioning—either positively or negatively. [Find a handy infographic here](#), which draws from the [TJMF Best Practices for Psychological Well-Being for the Legal Profession](#) and the [Guarding Minds @ Work framework](#) for developing supportive psychosocial workplaces.

🌱 **Support for Well-Being Starts at The Top.** How law firms can better combat poor mental health and wellbeing in their workforces: [Good Wellbeing Starts with Good Leadership](#), The Legal 500.

🌱 **Take a Holistic Approach.** How to instill a culture of well-being in law firms during times of continuous change: [The Intersection of Wellness and Leadership](#), ABA Law Practice Magazine.

📌 Be Inclusive and Tailor Your Support to the Needs of Underrepresented Employees.

- [Supporting the Well-Being of Your Underrepresented Employees](#), Harvard Business Review.
- [16 Ways To Improve Inclusivity While Promoting Employee Well-Being](#), Forbes.
- Proactively practice compassionate leadership in response to traumatic societal events that may spill over into the workplace and impact underrepresented employees: [#BlackEmployees Matter: Mega-Threats, Identity Fusion, and Enacting Positive Deviance in Organizations](#), Academy of Management Review (academic journal article).

📌 Train Managers. [Train Your Managers to Promote Health & Well-Being](#), American Psychological Association.

📌 Scaling Empathy. Interpersonal empathy is essential and so is creating an empathetic culture: [How to Achieve Empathetic Leadership at Scale](#), Engagement Multiplier.

📌 Detox Toxic Work Cultures.

- Building individual resilience and adaptability skills is important but cannot compensate for toxic work cultures: [Addressing Employee Burnout: Are You Solving the Right Problem?](#) McKinsey Health Institute.
- “‘Toxic rock stars,’ or bullies who evade consequences because they deliver results, can ruin the workplace experience for most employees, but they’re particularly harmful to women of color. [Leaders, Stop Rewarding Toxic Rock Stars](#), Harvard Business Review.

📌 Lighten The Load. Some good ideas about how law firms can “lessen the load”: [Big Law Stress Is Forcing Associates Out: What Can Firms Do?](#) Bloomberg Law.

📌 Destigmatize Help-Seeking for Mental Health. [We Should Allow Sad Days, Not Just Sick Days](#), Work-Life Podcast Hosted by Adam Grant.

📌 Cultivate Psychological Safety: “Psychological safety is a climate in which one feels one can be candid. It’s a place where interpersonal risks feel doable, interpersonal risks like speaking up with questions and concerns and half-baked ideas and even mistakes.” [Is it Safe to Speak Up at Work?](#), Work-Life Podcast Hosted by Adam Grant.

📌 Teach Collaboration: “Leaders who want to create collaborative workplace cultures try hard to instill collaboration as a value. What they forget is that collaboration requires good old-fashioned skills.”: [Wait a Minute – I’m Supposed to Collaborate With YOU?](#), Achimnovak.com.

📌 4-Day Work Week. [How the Legal Industry Can Adapt to the Four Day Week](#), Fretzin.com.

📌 See Other IWIL Resources Guides. More information and resources for leading well-being in the legal profession can be found in IWIL’s prior Resources Guides:

- **April 2022:** [Alcohol Awareness](#)
- **May 2022:** [Mental Health Awareness](#)
- **June 2022:** [Mind-Body Connection](#)
- **July 2022:** [Growth & Development](#)

USE OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This Resource Guide should not be considered legal or mental health advice or as an endorsement of any of the listed resources by the Institute for Well-Being in Law. It is provided for information purposes only, and you should personally evaluate all resources for fit and effectiveness for the purpose for which you plan to use them.