
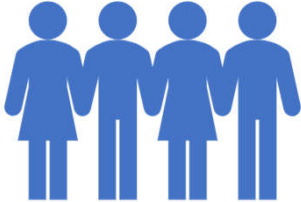


Employee Wellness

Creating an internal system to support employee mental health and wellbeing

July 14th, 2021
Holly Hatton-Bowers, Carrie Gottschalk, & Lisa Kaslon




1

Objectives

By the end of our presentation, we hope that you will:

- Learn about the ways we led, developed, and created a formal "Internal Employee Wellness Committee"
- Identify ways to use some of these strategies to champion Extension Employee wellness in your organization/programs



2

Why extension employee wellness and how we got here



Employees who feel and are well

Increased productivity, higher positive engagement, less missed time from work, and decreased sick time (Oswald, Proto, & Sgroi, 2012; Walsh, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2018)



Nebraska Extension Employees completed a survey in 2018 and identified:

Improving work and life balance (59.9%)
Creating a respect filled and supportive work environment (55.44%)



This led to the "Integrating Personal and Professional Wellbeing" Strategy group in 2018



2019 – Began identifying effective and research-based ways to support Extension Employee Wellness/Wellbeing - Integrated into Fall Conference




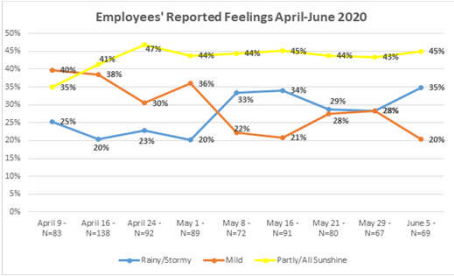
2020 - Pandemic

3

Weekly Discovery Report

- In 2020: Voluntary survey for extension employees to report their needs, experiences, and feeling each week
- Dean of Extension provided summary of these findings with resources to address needs when possible
- *"We polled our team about how they feel about going back to the office - there were no positive responses. Overwhelmingly, the answers were 'anxious' and 'nervous'. I am concerned for our team's mental health."* – Extension employee





Date	Rainy/Stormy	Mild	Partly/All Sunshine
Apr 9 - N=83	25%	40%	35%
Apr 16 - N=138	20%	38%	41%
Apr 24 - N=92	23%	30%	47%
May 1 - N=89	20%	36%	44%
May 8 - N=72	33%	22%	44%
May 16 - N=92	34%	21%	45%
May 21 - N=80	29%	28%	44%
May 29 - N=67	28%	28%	43%
June 5 - N=69	35%	20%	45%

4




Impact of work-related stress

- Work-related stress
- Changing jobs
- Absenteeism
- Health-care costs

5

The Costs



Of not taking action

- High medical, disability and worker's compensation costs
- Absenteeism
- Poor employee retention/high turnover
- Decreased productivity
- Reduced satisfaction and morale

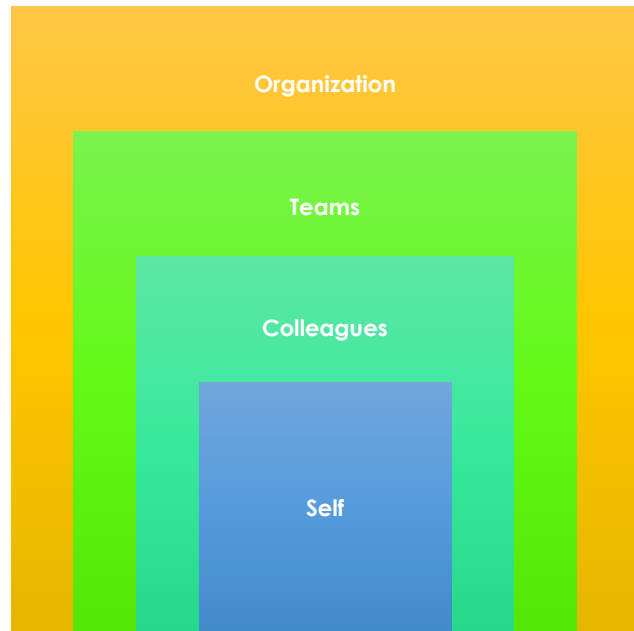
Value on investment

- Redefined workplace culture
- Improved employee job satisfaction
- Increased employee productivity
- Heightened employee morale
- Greater employee retention rates
- Better employee energy levels at work
- Improved on-the-job safety
- Increased comradery and team effectiveness
- Reduced presenteeism (overworked employees)

6

Solidifying Value

3. Which ultimately impacts the organization as a whole.
2. The more the employee benefits, the more direct influence and impact with colleagues and teams.
1. First and foremost, participation is for yourself. (*"employees who feel and are well . . ."*)



7

Developing an organizational framework

With full administrative support, the desire was to create an organizational framework that was both employee-driven and sustainable.



Take the work that has been done up to this point and move forward with an ***active, consistent, and purposeful*** Extension Employee Wellness group.



Engage a broad representation of those interested from across the organization.



Central hub for Extension Employee Wellness work.

8

Wellness Committee

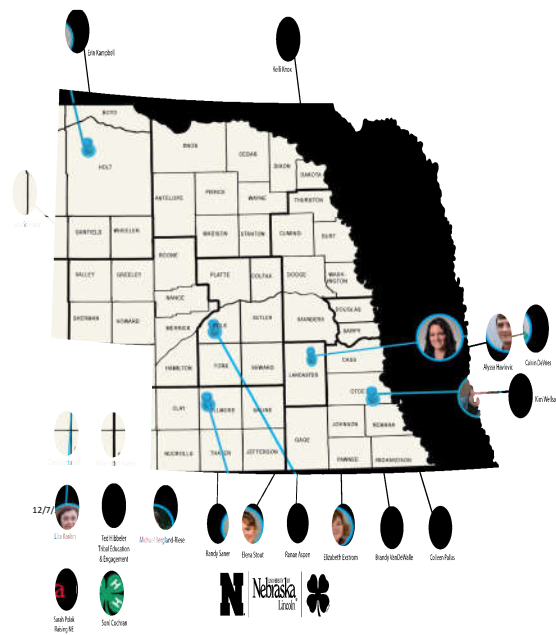
The intention of the Wellness Committee is to serve as a broad representation across the system to help advise and advocate on all aspects of employee wellness for all Extension employees.

- Each person on the inaugural committee agreed to a one-year term (2021).
- Moving forward the intention is to have three-year terms spaced among the committee.
- Committee leadership will transition annually.



9

Wellness Committee



10

Opportunities for Wellness

Dedicated to providing opportunities available to ALL Extension employees – regardless of title, role or location.

All facilitators, speakers, and presenters have expertise and experience in the topic.

11

We have all had moments of feeling overwhelmed and scattered at work. Maybe we have lots of projects or feel like we are running from one thing to the next. Mindfulness is ONE way to support us being more grounded and focused at work. It can provide us with resources for thinking and acting in healthier, less stressful ways. Join a small group for 4 weeks to learn about mindfulness in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Will meet virtually
Mondays from 11:00-11:50 am.
November 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th

CONTACT HOLLY HATTON-BOWERS
@HATTONB@UNL.EDU IF INTERESTED

Extension Employee
Wellness Opportunity

*Mid-week
Meditation*

Wednesdays 11:30 - 12:00 CT
October 28 - December 16, 2020

all experience levels welcome

Holly is a certified mindfulness facilitator and Carrie is a certified workplace mindfulness facilitator .

12



Wellness Fridays

- Started as Fall Conference Connector Activities
- *"These networking sessions are so important to our mental health and wellness. In a normal year, I have heard several Extension Educators say they feel very isolated and alone in the county. Many are not from Nebraska or are not close to their family and it does get difficult to build relationships when you first start in Extension. This year has been hard for many as we are so isolated due to the pandemic. We need these networking sessions. We need to check in routinely with each other. Thank you so much for continuing these networking opportunities! Such a great way to keep us all of us connected and well." Extension Educator*

13



WE'RE HAVING A

WELLNESS FRIDAY

THE LAST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH WILL BE FULL OF NETWORKING, CONNECTION AND WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities

- Rise & Grind Bootcamp
- Morning Movement
- Breakfast Club
- Coffee & Conversation
- Nature Challenge
- Cows, Corn & Coffee
- Money Talks
- Coffee & Convo – Tips for Productivity and Effectiveness
- Breakfast Club
- Cooking to Connect
- Game On
- Noon Grind
- We Run Nebraska
- Coffee & Conversation – Parenting and Professional-ing

14

Education & Connection

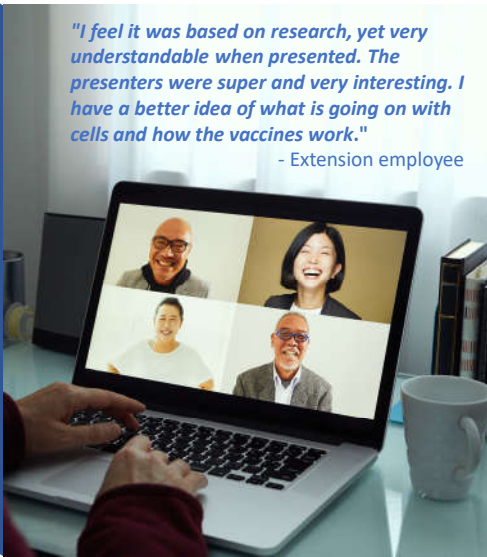
Topics (identified by Extension Employees):

- What is Loss and Grief Theory? - Linda Reddish, Extension Educator certified Grief Counselor
- Staying Active at Work – Dr. Danae Dinkel
- Self-Care and Connectedness – Dr. David Miers, community partner, Psychologist
- COVID-19 Info Hour: Biology, Immunology, and Vaccines – Drs Angela Pannier & Amanda Ramer-Tait

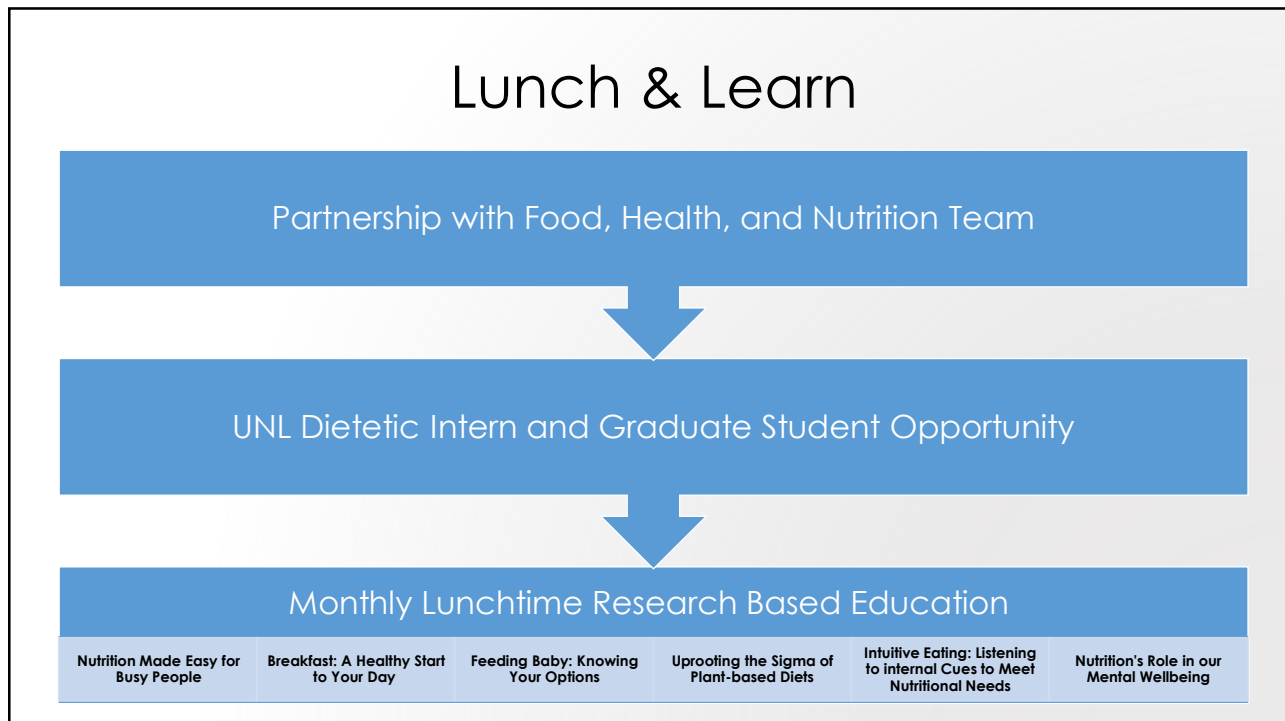
Attended by approximately 60-134 employees, offered once a month virtually for 1 hour. 94% to 100% agree they learned something new to use in their work

"I feel it was based on research, yet very understandable when presented. The presenters were super and very interesting. I have a better idea of what is going on with cells and how the vaccines work."

- Extension employee



15



16

Additional Plans & Opportunities



Office Place & Space

Efforts are underway to ensure all county offices, which include both university and county employees, have access to the same wellness services and supports.



Front Door Forum – Support Staff Conference – Focus on Wellness

Administrative support of wellness as a conference theme and approach.



Reaching One, Reaching All Team – Professional Development (Medicine Wheel, 'ism's')

"It honestly pointed out how I don't intentionally do it but I have stereotyped some groups of people without fully understanding them...Seek to understand before judging- that is what I walk away with. I really appreciated this talk...It has really made me reflect and think." - Extension Educator



Exit Interviews

"Not feeling like a valued member of Nebraska Extension, not knowing my supervisor, and at times not feeling that I could trust those around me."



Onboarding

"Thank you for the new employee workshop over the past two days. It really helped give me a feel for Extension and the culture. It was also excellent in helping me begin to make connections with others."

Reach Out for Wellness <https://extensionwellness.org/>

17

Moving Forward



- Continuously obtaining feedback, responding to ideas and suggestions, and making improvements.
- Sustainability of some of our wellness activities.
- Identifying effective ways to respond to all extension employees' wellness needs.

18