

Social Wellbeing: You Have Meaningful Friendships in Your Life

"Relationship helps us to define who we are and what we can become. Most of us can trace our successes to pivotal relationships."

— Don Clifton and Paula Nelson,
Soar With Your Strengths

The fabric of our lives is constructed person by person. As our relationships grow and develop, so too does our wellbeing. Our lives become richer, and we learn, grow and develop through others.

When you reflect on the most memorable events, experiences and moments in your life, you'll notice that they have something in common: the presence of another person. The best moments — and most agonizing ones — occur at the intersection between two people. We often underestimate the effect of our closest relationships and social connections on our wellbeing. However, our wellbeing is dramatically influenced by the people around us, as well as by our friends' independent network of relationships. Friendships provide enjoyable experiences in our lives. Some friendships help us to achieve our goals, while others help us relax, recharge and be healthy.

Why It Matters:

Social wellbeing is about having strong relationships and love in your life. But what does this have to do with you and the work that you do? Many leaders don't think it is their responsibility to help employees boost their social wellbeing. While strong social relationships are among the most fundamental of human needs, just 5% of U.S. workers strongly agree that their organization helps them build stronger personal relationships.

Gallup has studied the effect of friendships in the workplace. By asking millions of workers if they have a "best friend at work," Gallup discovered that people who do are seven times as likely to be engaged in their jobs. Without a best friend, work can be a lonely place. Those without a best friend in the workplace have only a one in 12 chance of being engaged. Social relationships at work have been shown to boost employee retention, safety, work quality and customer engagement. Human beings are social animals, and our need to connect with others does not stop when we enter the workplace.

Measure Social Wellbeing With Two Items:

Someone in my life always encourages me to be healthy.

My friends and family give me positive energy every day.

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Fast Facts:

- To have a good day, a person needs to spend six hours a day socializing.
- People of all ages report that the more social time in their day, the better the day — up to a point.
- People who have at least three or four very close friendships are healthier, have higher wellbeing and are more engaged in their jobs.
- Engaged employees are four times more likely to feel comfortable discussing social wellbeing with their managers than are disengaged employees.
- Good exercise and eating habits are closely linked to having good social wellbeing.

Thriving in Social Wellbeing

People with thriving social wellbeing have several close relationships that make their life more productive and enjoyable. They are surrounded by people who encourage their development and growth. They deliberately spend time — on average about six hours a day — investing in their relationships. They make time for gatherings and trips that strengthen those relationships even more. As a result, people with thriving social wellbeing have great relationships, which gives them positive energy on a daily basis.

Use these insights, conversation starters and discussion questions to create a workplace where everyone can thrive in this element of wellbeing.

Ask Yourself:

- How do I show the people who are most important to me that I care about them?
- How can I spend more time with a friend or colleague today?
- Who would enjoy hearing from me?
- How can I provide friendship and support to someone?
- How am I modeling social wellbeing to my team?
- What can I do to show others that I appreciate them today?
- How can I create more opportunities for my team to connect socially?

Ask Your Team Members:

- Do we spend enough social time together as a team?
- Who needs your support and attention today?
- How do we celebrate each other's personal and professional successes?
- How do we show our support for each other's social wellbeing?

Take Action With These Best Practices:

- 1 Spend six hours a day socializing with friends, family and colleagues. This time includes phone, email and other communication whether you are at work or home.
- 2 Schedule time for team social events or activities.
- 3 Mix social time with physical activity. For example, take a long walk with a friend so you can motivate each other to be healthy.
- 4 Create opportunities for people to learn about one another — their work and lives.
- 5 Get to know each other's personal hobbies and interests.
- 6 Celebrate each other's personal and professional successes.
- 7 Share individual goals so team members can provide support and encouragement.