Headspace for Work

Mindfulness and the Work Culture of Tomorrow

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Intro

Since 2020, organizations and their workforces have been under pressure. The uncertainty of the pandemic led to massive layoffs, only to be followed by The Great Resignation a year later.

In the US, over 47 million people walked away from their jobs[1] and 69% of UK employees are ready to move to a new job.[2] Across the globe, 14 million workers left their fields and the workforce altogether.[3] Organizations are struggling to balance the urgent need to find and keep talented workers while innovating at an unprecedented pace. Fortunately, research shows that mindfulness can help companies do both.

Leaders who implement mindfulness practices feel more creative and in control.[4] And when they extend mindfulness into their team dynamics, they notice significant improvements: employees become more invested in their work, which translates directly to better business performance. According to Gallup's 2017 State of the Global Workplace report, businesses with engaged employees can outperform those without by more than 200%.[5]

For leaders looking to build more resilient organizations, you've taken the first step just by downloading this guide. We'll help you diagnose the state of your work culture and reveal how mindfulness can help you create value for employees and stakeholders alike.

A Gallup study found that companies with engaged employees outperform those without by more than

200%

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS AT WORK? When you are fully present and engaged with what's going on in the moment, that's mindfulness. By practicing mindfulness, you're learning how to be aware of your thoughts and feelings without distraction or judgment. At work, mindfulness can help everyone perform their best by improving focus and reducing stress.

Reframing trends as symptoms

It can be tempting to see worker trends as cultural phenomena that exist outside of your organization — or a phase that will pass — but it begs the question: How are worker trends a reflection of what's going on in your workplace?

If only 36% of employees are actively involved in and enthusiastic about their work,[6] what is going on with the other 64%? And what role can your organization play in improving those numbers?

On the following pages, we'll look at a few of the most widespread challenges:

Work/life balance	Stress and burnout
Turnover	Mental health stigma

Work/life balance

As remote and hybrid work has taken hold, work and home have blurred together. Although many workplaces and employees tout the benefits of working from home, it does have drawbacks. The success of working from home depends highly on the space, privacy, and home dynamics of the individual. For some, working remotely can give them back valuable time, and for others, the demands of their work and home lives feel simultaneous and constant.

In Australia, workers prefer the hybrid work model: 74% of survey respondents wanted a mix of face-to-face and remote work. Only 10% said they wanted to return to a traditional work environment.[7] But it's not just where people work that disrupts their sense of balance. Layoffs and high turnover put more pressure on fewer employees to meet business goals. This follows a long-term trend of overwork. A study by the World Health Organization shows that from 2000–2016 there was a 29% increase in deaths caused by working 55+ hours a week.[8]

Even before physical effects are felt, poor work/life balance impacts mental health dramatically. In our 2021 Work Trends Report, **workers from across the world told us that "work/life balance" and "pressures from work" were the second and third greatest sources of stress in their lives, respectively.[9]**

10%

say they want to return to a traditional work environment

29%

increase in deaths caused by working 55+ hours a week

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER Get your team thinking about how they can get better at seeing the signs of stress and burnout.

Does your workplace reward people for working excessive hours?
Are employees working more hours than they can comfortably handle?
Do working arrangements benefit some employees more than others?
Can your teams unplug from work without guilt?

Is there anything your organization can do to save employees time?
Are there better ways of communicating with remote workers?
How can you protect work/life balance in your organization?

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Stress and burnout

Stress is a normal part of life, but when it builds up, the results can be harmful to employees and organizations. It can impact attitude, behaviors, communication, and even a person's physical health. So it's concerning that 54% of employees see themselves as "stressed" or "extremely stressed."[9]

Without the tools or support to manage stress, employees eventually experience burnout. This sense of overwhelm makes them actively disengage from their work and responsibilities. About 15% of employees are actively disengaged with their work, and 74% of that group are looking for a new job.[6]

Whether they stay or go, letting employees reach the point of burnout can have a negative impact on the whole team. Employee burnout may appear as emotionally tense conversations, negative outlook, lack of commitment, or even neglect. And while these behaviors would prompt many leaders to consider discipline, it's often a call for help.

15%
of employees are actively disengaged with their work

54%
of employees see themselves as "stressed" or "extremely stressed"

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER Get your team thinking about how they can get better at seeing the signs of stress and burnout.

How can we tell when someone is stressed or overwhelmed?
What can we do to lighten the load when someone is feeling burned out?
What resources can we give employees to manage their stress?

How can employees tell us when they are stressed?
How can we take preventative measures to reduce stress?
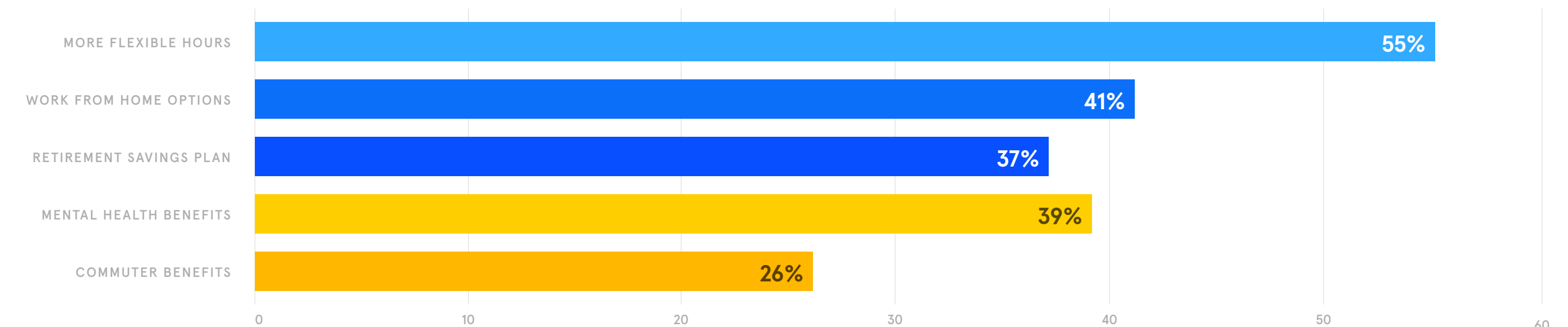Are our employees engaged at work?

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Turnover and talent shortages

Globally, a combined 83% of employers plan to hire or keep their workforce levels steady, yet nearly 70% of businesses are struggling with hiring or retaining talent.[10]

In other words, most businesses are seeking good people, and the labor market is tight. Many of the employees leaving their jobs are shifting their priorities, looking for work that will offer more flexibility and balance. They're taking more time on the job hunt, making sure to find an employer that will take their mental health seriously.

83%
of employers plan to hire or keep their workforce levels steady

70%
of businesses are struggling with hiring or retaining talent

Employer-provided benefits & perks important to employees when considering a new job

MORE FLEXIBLE HOURS	55%
WORK FROM HOME OPTIONS	41%
RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN	37%
MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS	39%
COMMUTER BENEFITS	26%

Source: Headspace 2021 Workplace Trends Report

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER Get your team thinking about how they can get better at seeing the signs of stress and burnout.

Are our current employees happy here?
How can we adapt to retain our current employees?
How do we show job candidates that we share their values?

Can we make the hiring process more mindful?
How can we involve employees in creating the workplace they want?

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Mental health stigma

At the root of many other challenges is the fact that most workplaces are new to discussions of mental health. The stigma holds strong, silencing workers and hindering progress. In a McKinsey survey, 75% of employers reported having mental health stigmas in their organizations. Employees even said they would avoid seeking treatment just so people wouldn't find out they had a mental illness or substance use disorder.[11]

Mental illness is the most common reason for early retirement and the second most common reason for sick leave in Germany.[12] More than a quarter of German adults are affected by mental illness every year, but only 18.9% of these people will actually seek assistance.

When employees are at work, they pick up on implicit and explicit signals about what is considered acceptable, including behavior and communication about mental health. They may receive mixed messages from leadership, middle managers, or their colleagues. Then, when an individual struggles, uncertainty about their employer's response may make it feel safer to hide it from the team.

Employees are looking for permission from leadership to bring their whole selves to work, and without it, they may ignore their needs just to protect their jobs.

75%
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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER Get your team thinking about how they can get better at seeing the signs of stress and burnout.

How can leadership lead by example when it comes to mental health?
How can we encourage proactive skill-building in addition to crisis management?
How do we currently reward or punish people for talking about mental health?

What resources can we share with employees?
What makes people feel safe when sharing sensitive information?

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Paving the way through culture

So, what does a healthy culture look like? Since only 10% of HR leaders are confident that their employees understand their culture,[13] it may be helpful to examine some of the fundamentals and how to practice them across your organization.

Values

At its core, culture is the attitudes and behaviors that shape the way your organization does things. You probably have some company values to start from, so here are a few pillars of mindfulness that you may want to add to the list.

Curiosity
We stay open to different perspectives and new ideas without judgment.

Candor
We are present in the moment, listening and responding thoughtfully.

Compassion
We show up for others when they need us.

Consistency
We value healthy habits that help people thrive.

Leadership

A philosophy alone won't change culture. New ideas take root when employees see them in action.

This is the leadership's opportunity to incorporate the company's values into their decision-making and communications. Show your organization that you're dedicated to the well-being of every individual by starting the conversation about mental health. Create purpose by giving everyone a role in making a culture of mindfulness successful.

If you can, get personal. **Leaders are the organization's role models for mental health,** so telling people when you need a mental health day or have too much on your plate is a great reminder that it happens to everyone. Your transparency can help everyone find healthy boundaries and build relationships based on open communication.

Engagement

Modeling mindfulness is a great way to show that things are changing, but turning change into culture takes engagement from the whole organization. Everyone needs to be invited to have a role in the transformation.

To create an authentic shift in an organization's behavior, leaders can't be the gatekeepers. By its very nature, culture requires a level of commitment from everyone. That means advocating for your teams, seeking feedback from your reports, and addressing needs in a timely manner. One of the greatest barriers to success is treating culture as a mandate instead of a dialogue that builds mutual trust.

10%

of HR leaders are confident that their employees understand their culture

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Resources

56% of employers want to do more to improve staff well-being, but they don't feel they have the right training or guidance to make it a reality.[14] Help everyone embody a new culture with access to explicit guidelines and policies, ongoing education, skill-building, and advocates they can trust. When you clarify expectations and give your team the tools to meet them, everyone can succeed together.

Make it easy for people to get the help they need from day one of their employment and keep communication open over time. Let them know what to do when stress strikes and point them towards the allies in the organization who can help. Even better, give employees proactive ways to destress as a regular part of their workday and build skills to manage stress before it happens.

When looking for mindfulness resources, keep these factors in mind:

56%

of employers want to do more to improve staff well-being, but they don't feel they have the right training or guidance to make it a reality

Accessibility Available and convenient anytime	**Enjoyment** A pleasant time employees look forward to	**Ease** Simple to understand and use	**Credibility** Based on thorough research and best practices
Flexibility Good for short sessions and in-depth learning	**Business-ready** Made to facilitate mindfulness at the enterprise level	**Relevance** Speaks to diverse audiences and situations	**Rewarding** Shows progress over time and rewards consistency

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Community

Culture isn't a set of rules for employees to follow, it's a way of creating a community of people with shared values. Like in any great community, it's better when everyone is together.

Share the responsibility of building and maintaining a mindful culture across the whole organization by finding ways to practice together. It may be as simple as a one-minute meditation before meetings start or habits that are completely unique to your organization.

Lasting culture change doesn't happen from the top down or the bottom up. It happens when everyone has a role to play in making the workplace a great place to be.
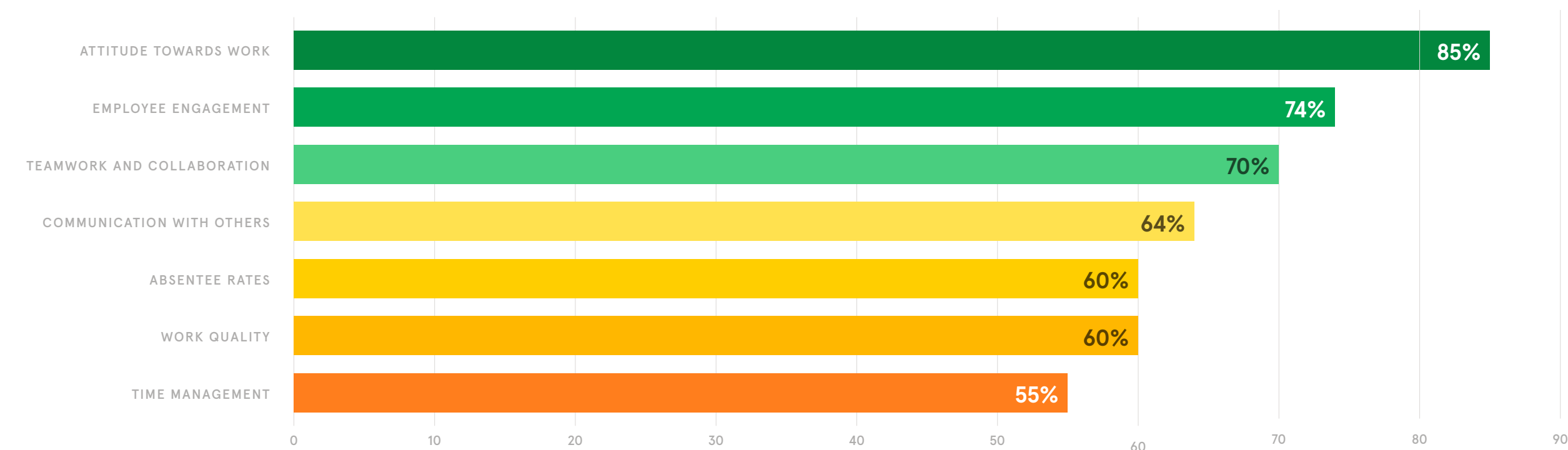
Real change,
real impact

It's not easy to change company culture. It takes time, collaboration, and even a bit of discomfort to fully embrace a new way of working. But the results speak for themselves.

For every $1 invested in preventative mental health support, organizations get an $8 return on investment.[15] By investing in mental health early, employers can help people learn critical skills to manage difficult situations before they escalate. Collectively, employers can save as much as $300 billion in lost productivity caused by stress.[16]

Organizations that implement mindfulness programs also see an uptick in key employee performance metrics:

"How much improvement have you observed in employees or teams who are part of these mindfulness programs with regards to their...?" (Percent showing significant and moderate improvement)

Category	Percent
ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORK	85%
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	74%
TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION	70%
COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS	64%
ABSENTEE RATES	60%
WORK QUALITY	60%
TIME MANAGEMENT	55%

Source: Headspace 2022 Mindfulness and the Leader of the Future

The Headspace effect

We've seen the same results with over 2,000+ companies that have used Headspace for Work to revolutionize their culture. From focus to sleep to positivity, employees are thriving because of the impact of mindfulness.

16%
more positivity

with 10 days of Headspace

27%
less irritability

with 10 days of Headspace

32%
less stress

with 30 days of Headspace

14%
less burnout

with 4 sessions of Headspace

19%
decrease in anxiety symptoms

with 8 weeks of Headspace

29%
decrease in depressive symptoms

with 8 weeks of Headspace

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How can
Headspace
for Work help?

Headspace for Work combines our well-loved, evidenced-based mindfulness app with enterprise tools to infuse good mental health habits across your organization.
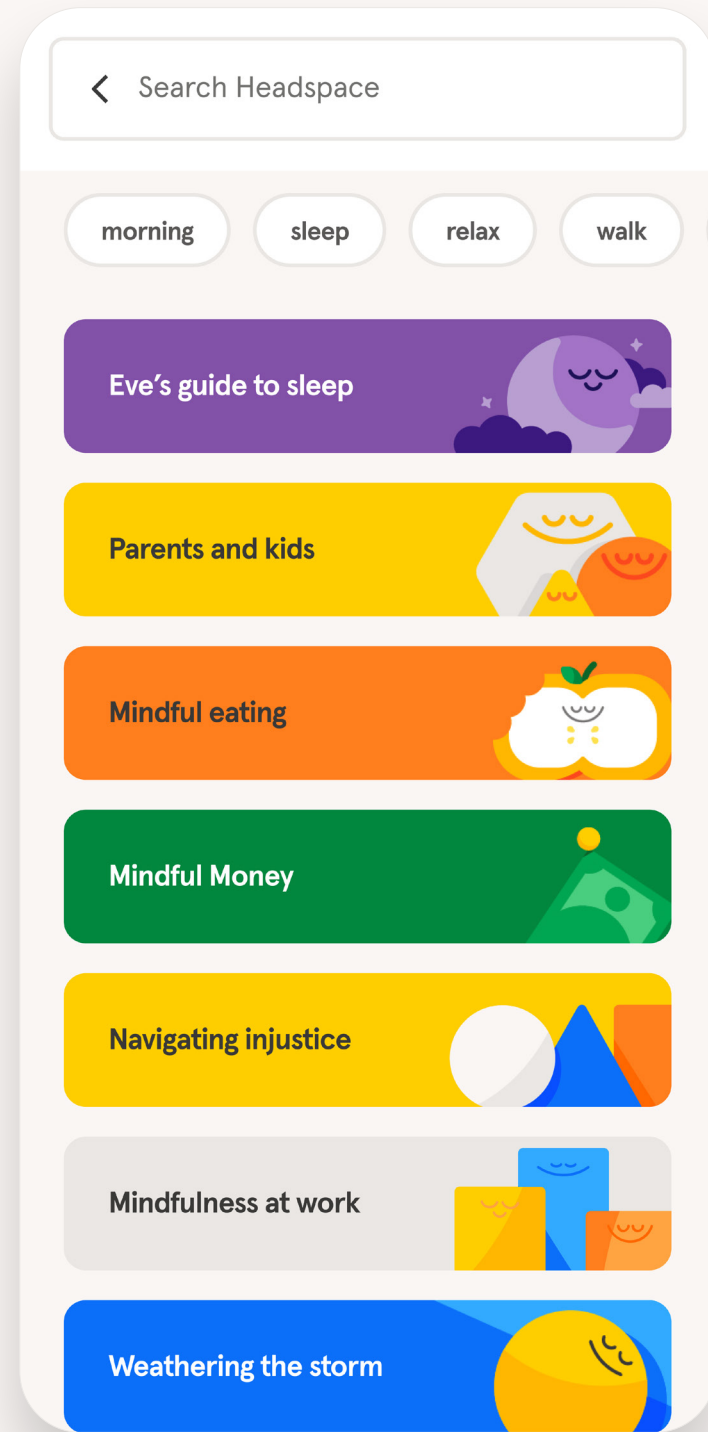
For employees

Help them build a better relationship with sleep, stress, focus, movement, and more with an app that's easy and fun to use. It's **mindfulness in their pocket**, whenever they need it. Our expert instructors break it down step by step.

For administrators

Simplify your communications and mental health programming with our **ever-expanding library**. Explore research and tactical guides, launch pre-made wellness campaigns, or share live events and videos with your employees.
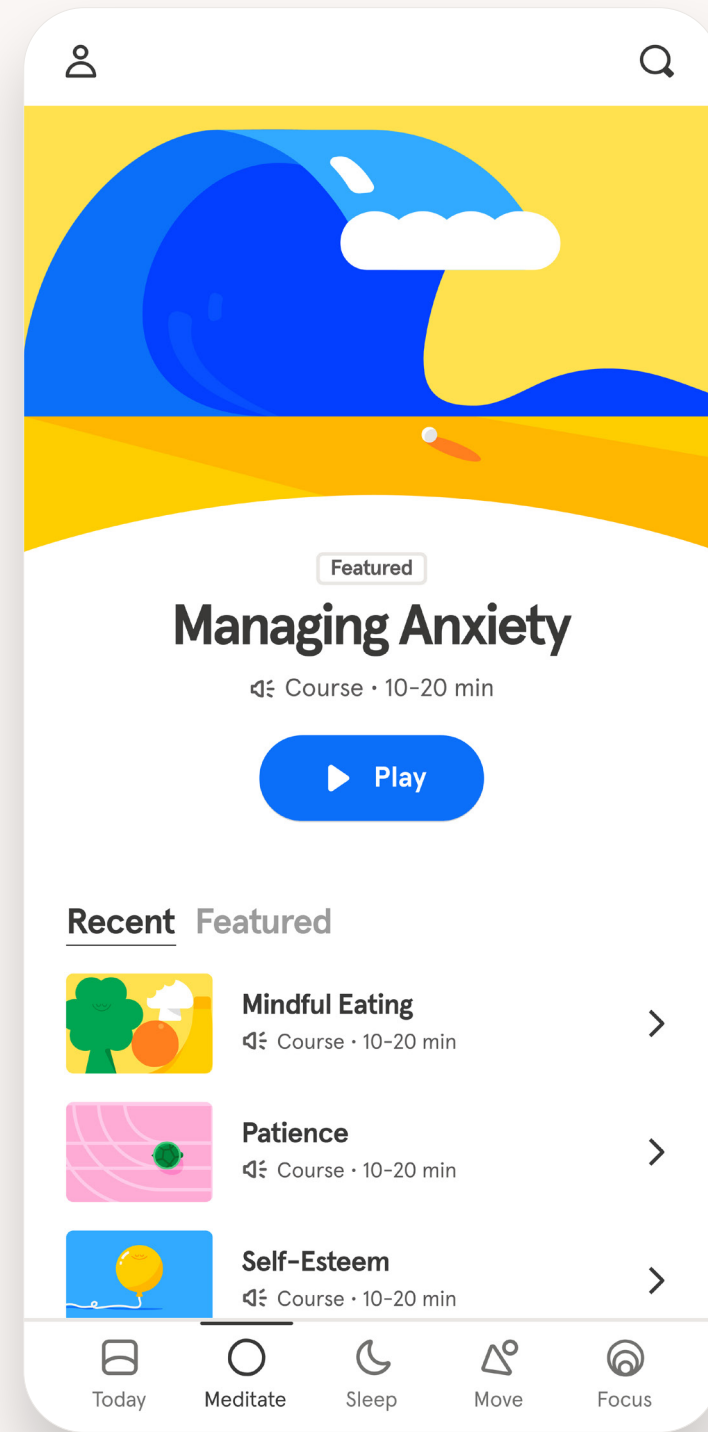
For leaders

It's easy to see ROI with our enterprise analytics **and dedicated client success team**. We help you understand what's going on with your employees and how to maximize the impact of mindfulness in your organization.
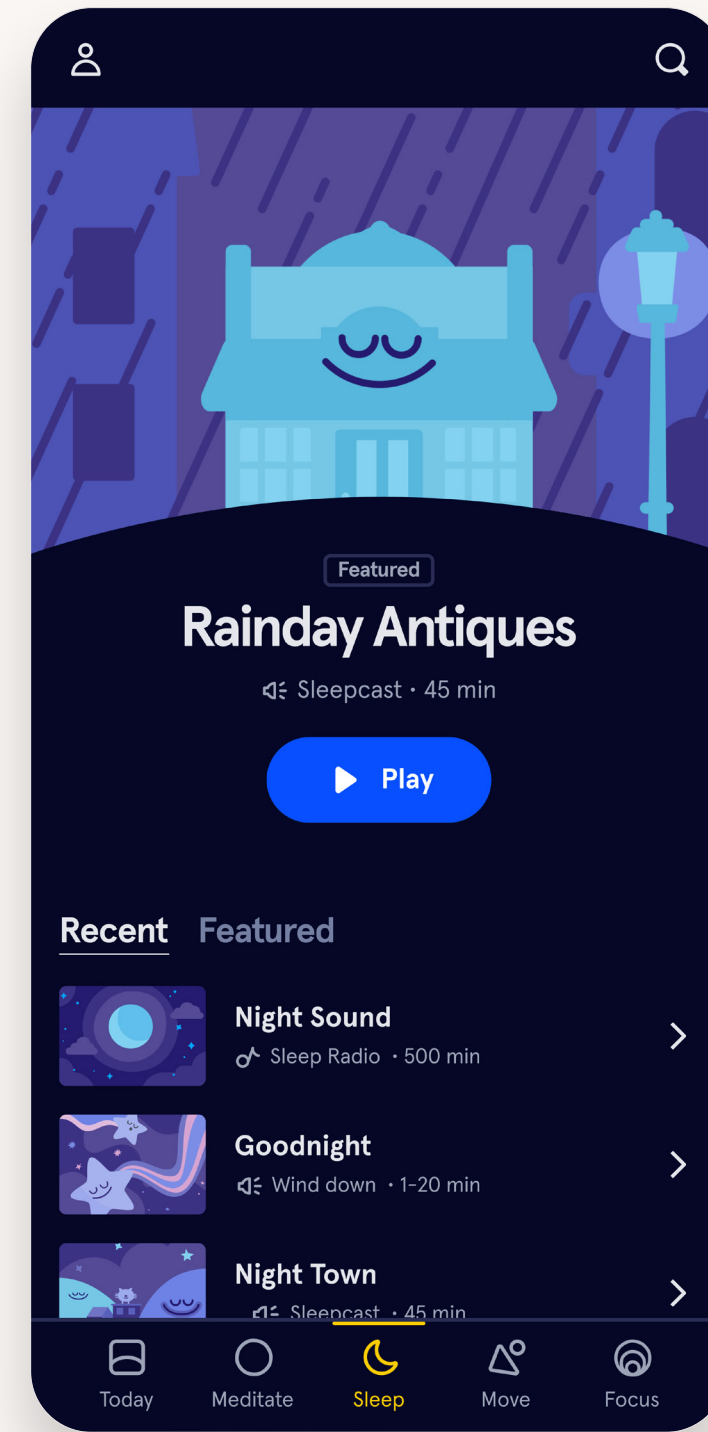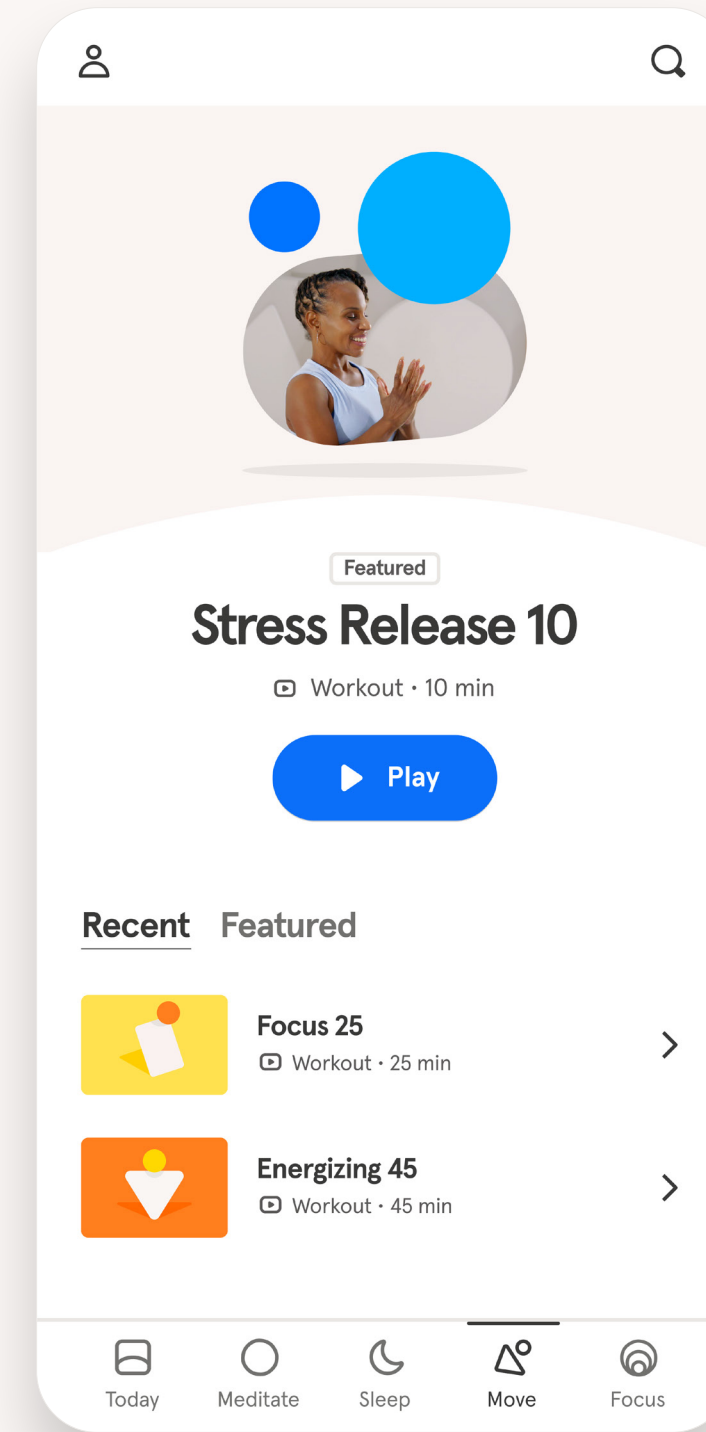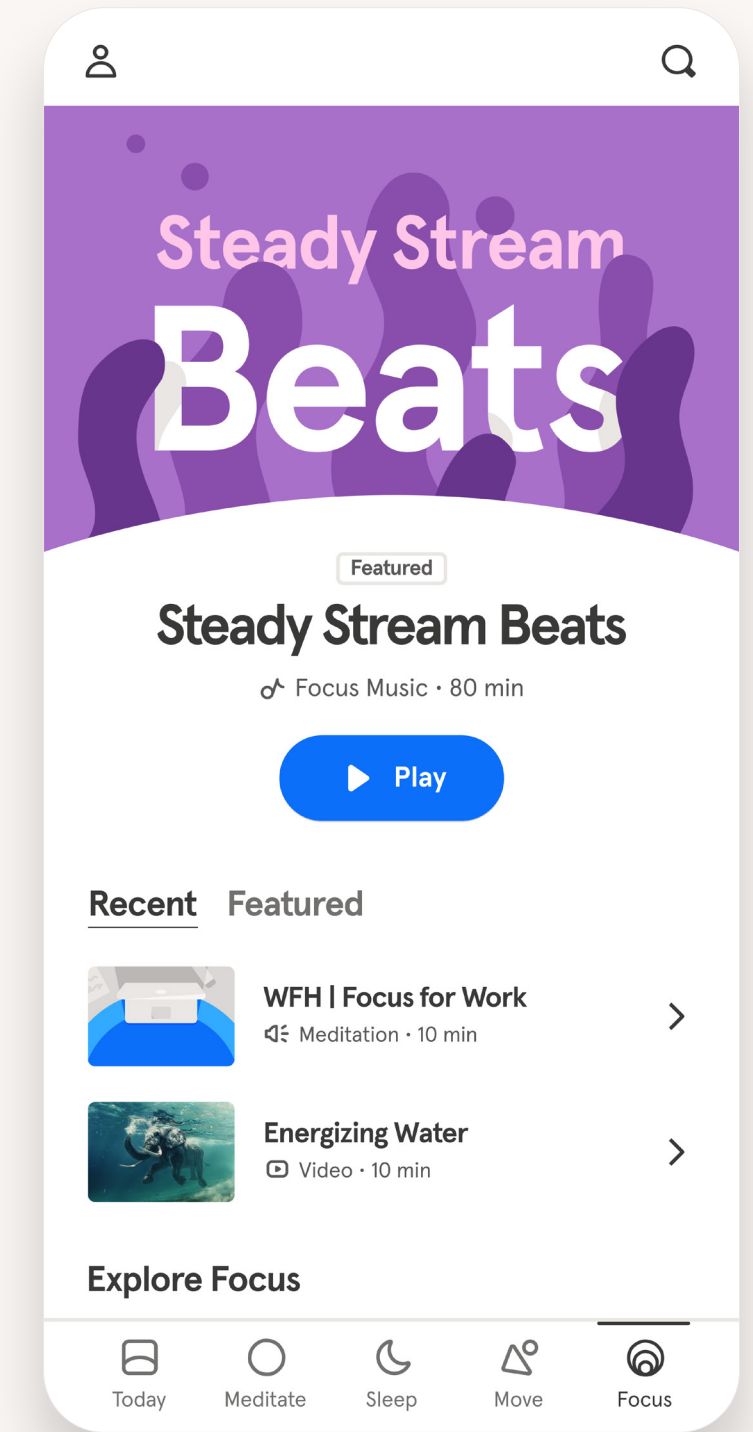
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Explore
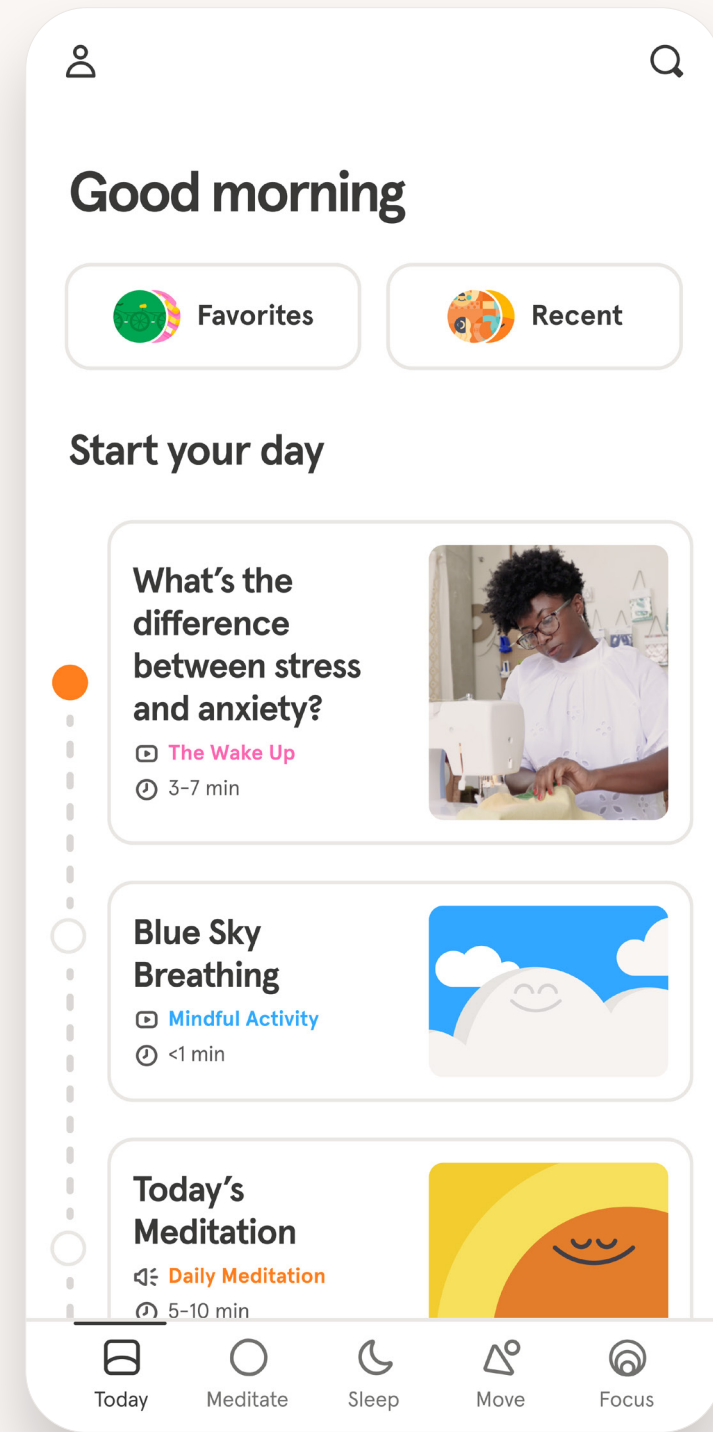
Today

Meditate

Sleep

Move

Focus

"**After reading the employee feedback from our initial pilot on Headspace, we knew it was the right choice for us.**

With Headspace, we're able to provide an on-demand, approachable solution to support our employees' well-being in a way that works for them."

Sara Torres,
Global Wellbeing Strategist, Adobe

Start the journey towards mindful culture today

Every organization's path to mindfulness looks different, and we're with you every step of the way.

BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Visit headspace.com/work to explore the research behind bringing mindfulness into the workplace.

MAKE A PLAN

Contact us or schedule a demo to see how Headspace for Work can transform your organization.

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