

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# IMPROVING YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS

### *Caring for our mental health is a matter of balancing all areas of life*

Our mental health influences how we handle our emotions, deal with stress, and overcome life's setbacks and challenges. While we may think of mental wellness as being about our minds, caring for our mental health is a matter of balancing all areas of our life. For example, our moods are very much impacted by what we eat and drink, and whether we've gotten enough sleep. Physical activity is also important. Simply taking a brisk walk each day is shown to reduce anxiety and depression.

Research from the "Blue Zones," which are long-lived communities around the globe, shows that people who are happiest and live the longest share several characteristics in common. These characteristics are:

- **Purpose and meaning in their lives.** Whether it's raising a family, having a rewarding career, volunteering for a cause, practicing a religious faith, or engaging in a hobby you're passionate about, having a purpose in life is beneficial for people of all ages.
- **Strong social connections.** When we connect with others, we feel supported and our levels of fear and apprehension tend to subside. Acts of kindness toward others has also been shown to boost happiness.
- **Healthy eating and physical activity.** Eating lots of fruits and vegetables and staying active is linked to better mental and physical health.
- **Ability to manage stress.** Uncontrolled stress can lead to emotional problems and physical illness. People who are resilient are better able to bounce back from adversity and have learned how to deal with stress. Mindfulness, meditation, being out in nature, and spiritual practices can offer a calm and safe refuge from life's many stressors.

It is never too late to work on improving your mental wellness. And while no one can escape problems or hardships in life, people who are mentally resilient have confidence that they can handle whatever challenges come their way.

