

Key Elements for Creating a Workplace Wellness Space

Chronic stress is one of the most important health issues facing employees

The majority of Americans cite work as a significant source of stress: almost 2/3 of educators say work is “always” or “often” stressful. Most workplaces provide little time and few opportunities for self-care during the day. Dedicated employee wellness spaces can promote relaxation, social interaction, and work collaboration to decrease stress levels, as well as increase interaction and team building.*

Here are key elements for planning and designing an inviting workplace wellness space

Ask employees about their desired features and priorities for a wellness room. This is a critical first step that will create a space that meets employees’ needs:



- » Conduct a brief survey with employees to identify the amenities they would like to see in a wellness space.
- » During meetings, discuss top priorities for the wellness space.

Create a welcoming and relaxing environment:

- » Refresh paint, floor coverings or window coverings.
- » Use decorations—add photos, plants, and art pieces.
- » Switch from overhead fluorescent lighting to softer light from table and floor lamps.



Design a wellness space to facilitate socializing:

- » Select sofas, pillows, and comfortable chairs.
- » Select rounds tables and chairs.

Include a space for individual alone time:



- » Include room dividers (can be temporary).
- » Place an individual chair apart from other furniture in a quiet corner.
- » Create a sign-up sheet for use of the quiet space.

Differentiate the wellness space from other workspaces so employees can relax and regroup during the day:



- » Keep office equipment and supplies in another room or stored neatly in cupboards.
- » Do not use the wellness space as a storage room.
- » Designate the space for employees only.

Offer options for relaxing physical activities or mindfulness:

- » Provide yoga mats, floor pillows or hand weights.
- » Provide equipment to play soothing music or mindfulness guides.



Develop plans to activate and maintain the wellness space.



- » Rotate wellness champion responsibilities to coordinate maintaining and cleaning the space (building maintenance, employee assignments).
- » Develop a calendar for events including wellness-related trainings, educational sessions, social activities, and team building.
- » Adopt policies that facilitate and sustain use of the wellness space. Examples include a policy to provide classroom coverage for teachers needing to use the wellness space after a traumatic encounter or a policy to allow employees a mindfulness break during the work day.

*2017 Educator Quality of Life Survey, AFT