

# HEALTH COACHING

AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH  
TO REDUCE STRESS IN THE  
WORKPLACE



# THE CHANGING FACE OF HEALTH

Health and wellness aren't something that we can leave behind when we walk out the door to work each morning. **Our physical, emotional, and mental states are intrinsically part of who we are and how we feel.** When one of these areas is out of balance there is often a ripple effect into all areas of our lives...and this naturally includes our work life.

With an aging population, workers ranging across multiple generations, fierce competition to attract and retain top talent, new technology, culture challenges, and an increasingly sedentary population, there is more talk than ever around personal well-being and workplace wellness awareness. **Organizations are looking for creative and effective ways to stand out and be more productive and healthier for the long term.** Forward thinking organizations are keen to help their employees be as healthy as possible. They know healthy employees are better engaged in their jobs and generally more productive.

An effective wellness program that results in a positive return on investment is one that is relevant to the individual: their demographics, interests and needs, and work and home demands, just to name a few. Such factors specifically influence how we function at home and at work. This means addressing and implementing key cornerstones of fitness, health, and wellness for all levels and areas of need covering physical activity and movement, nutrition, and mental health .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report from the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System: Mental Illness in Canada, 2015



Workers with both mental health and physical health conditions have been found to have two to five times the likelihood of functional disability and absence from work. Taking a comprehensive approach to wellness is key as all aspects are deeply intertwined and have a “cluster effect” on health challenges and benefits. For example, excess mental stress has been shown to contribute to chronic physical illness, including high blood pressure, hardening of the arteries, obesity, and diabetes. Whereas people with chronic physical conditions have twice the likelihood of experiencing a mood or anxiety disorder when compared to those without a chronic physical condition.

Mental health is a workplace issue. Evidence consistently proves that certain work situations, including lack of value and respect in the workplace, are associated with an increased risk of common mental disorders<sup>2</sup>.

**In fact, 1 in 5 Canadians (7 million) will experience a mental illness annually, yet only half (1 in 10), will use health services for mood and anxiety conditions each year. Almost half of us agree that work is the most stressful part of our day, and 82% of employees with mental health issues indicate that they impact their work.**

We now know that how we think and feel emotionally impacts our physical health. Direct associations have been found between perceived stress at work and cancer at 5 sites (lung, colon, rectum, stomach, and lymph tissue). Psychosocial factors play an important role in the development of hypertension, which has many ramifications on our health<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, “Making the Business Case: Relevant Statistics,” accessed January 19, 2020, <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/psychological-health-and-safety/Relevant-Statistics>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., “Making the Business Case: Relevant Statistics.”

# WHY CHOOSE COACHING: THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT

All of the above directly relates to the bottom line for business owners and employers. Costs associated with mental illness (in terms of absenteeism, productivity, indemnities, and healthcare) were estimated at \$51 billion in Canada <sup>4</sup>. A workplace where staff is suffering reduces the organization's overall performance. Health and wellness coaching is among the best solutions to improving mental health in the workplace, including employee engagement, resilience, coping, and productivity.

Evidence shows that workplace coaching can help to decrease individuals' stress levels. Coaching is a non-clinical, future-oriented intervention to help individuals grow, adapt, and change behaviours. **Coaching has been shown to produce significant positive effects for self-rated health, life satisfaction, psychological distress, burnout, and need for recovery. Coaching can help boost workers' levels of internal resources to help them manage stress.** It also helps workers increase their levels of internal personal resources (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) <sup>5</sup>. "Resource activation" is when people draw upon their own skills and resources to help them face challenges. Stress and difficult situations in life are unavoidable, but we can build a toolbox of techniques to help us build resilience in the face of challenging times.

<sup>4</sup> Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, "Making the Business Case: Considering the Costs," accessed January 19, 2020, [www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/psychological-health-and-safety/Considering-the-Costs](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/psychological-health-and-safety/Considering-the-Costs)

<sup>5</sup> McGonagle, A. K., Beatty, J. E., & Joffe, R. (2014). Coaching for workers with chronic illness: Evaluating an intervention.



# RECENT RESEARCH ON COACHING AND WELL-BEING SHOW<sup>6</sup>

- \* SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN WELL-BEING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS
- \* SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN ALL 5 DOMAINS OF QUALITY OF LIFE (MENTAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING, AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY)
- \* REDUCED LEVEL OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND REDUCED PERCEIVED STRESS LEVELS
- \* INCREASE IN RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE WITH RESPECT TO ACHIEVING/SUSTAINING HIGH LEVELS OF LIFE SATISFACTION
- \* INCREASE IN RATINGS OF CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO ACHIEVE/SUSTAIN THIS LIFE SATISFACTION
- \* POSITIVE SHIFT IN READINESS TO MAKE CHANGES WITH RESPECT TO ACHIEVING/SUSTAINING A HIGH LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION
- \* IMPROVED RESILIENCE, WORK BOUNDARIES, SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-COMPASSION AND SELF-CARE IN PHYSICIANS

Similarly, in a recent coaching pilot study for a regional health authority in Vancouver, B.C., 12 Weeks to Wellness, a Canadian wellness and health Coaching company, was asked to provide coaching to address several challenges prevalent in the health workers' environment, including stress, mental wellness, burnout, absenteeism and presenteeism.

## THE RESULTS OF COACHING BY 12 WEEKS TO WELLNESS

12 Weeks to Wellness was developed by leading health and wellness professionals and offers unique coach-led, client-centered stress, coping, resilience weight loss and other work life relevant programs that are tailored to each individual's needs and delivered by certified coaches.

The 12 Weeks to Wellness coaching pilot was based on best practices and focused on goal setting, behaviour changes, increased self-awareness, personal growth, and development, and perceived stress and resilience.

<sup>6</sup> Schneider, S., Kingsolver, K., & Rosdahl, J. (2014). Physician coaching to enhance well-being: A qualitative analysis of a pilot intervention.

## **FURTHERMORE, FOR THIS STUDY, INTERVENTION COMPONENTS KEY TO THE PRACTICE OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHING WERE IMPLEMENTED**

- 1. The coaching process is client centered**
- 2. Coaching centers on client-determined goals**
- 3. The coach elicits self-discovery and active learning processes rather than more passive client roles where clients are solely 'advised' or 'educated'**
- 4. The coaching process utilizes methods to encourage accountability for behaviors**
- 5. Provides some type of education to clients along with using coaching processes**

All pilot participants had access to the 12 Weeks Wellness Portal, hosted by CoreHealth Technologies, for validated assessments, goal setting tools, self-directed workbooks, articles and more to support them on their change journey. The award winning CoreHealth Technologies wellness portal offers security practices that satisfy the toughest security standards required for this project.

All participants were asked to complete two stress assessments and a program satisfaction survey before coaching (T1), after 3 hours of coaching (T2), and after 6 hours of coaching (T3). The 12 Weeks to Wellness life coaching program showed significantly positive results illustrating success in all areas of the program:

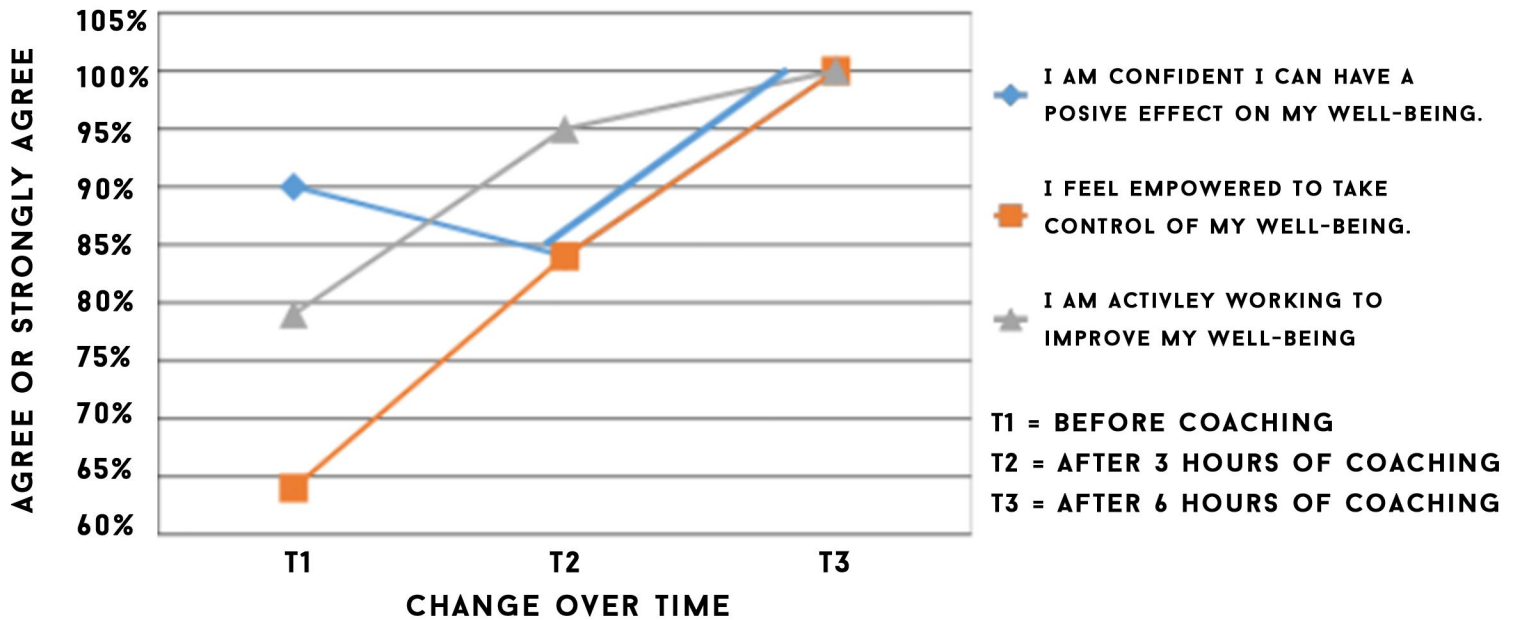
**70% OF PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY HAD MADE MAJOR PROGRESS TOWARDS THEIR GOAL, REACHED THEIR GOAL OR ALMOST REACHED THEIR GOAL.**

**86% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE IN THE HIGH OR MODERATE STRESS CATEGORY BEFORE COACHING. AFTER SIX HOURS OF COACHING THIS NUMBER WAS REDUCED TO 47%.**

Creating a feeling of empowerment is an important part of coaching and subsequent change. At the start of the program (T1) 64% of the participants agreed to feeling empowered to take control of their well-being. Half way the program (after completing 3 hours of coaching) 84% felt empowered. At the end of the program 100% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt empowered.

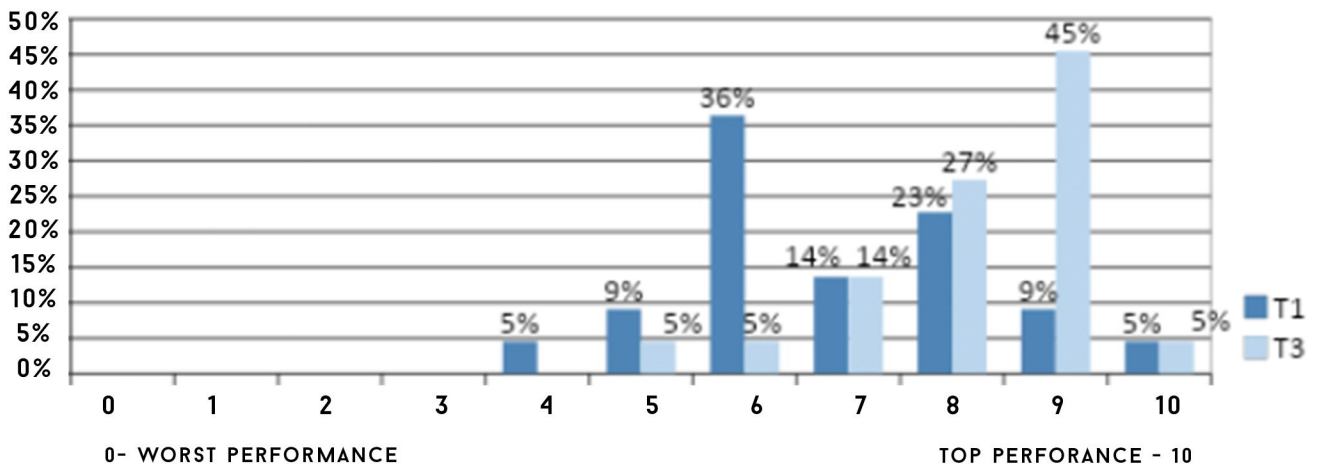
<sup>7</sup> The Sage Handbook for Coaching, "Coaching in Healthcare", accessed January 19, 2020, [https://www.vumc.org/pmr/sites/default/files/publication\\_files/Chapter%2032%20Coaching%20in%20Healthcare.pdf](https://www.vumc.org/pmr/sites/default/files/publication_files/Chapter%2032%20Coaching%20in%20Healthcare.pdf)

Coaching can help participants feel more in charge and in control of their lives and well-being. The following chart demonstrates the rising feelings of self-efficacy that participants experienced:



Job satisfaction is a crucial element for many people in how well they rate their overall well-being. When people are pleased with their performance at work, and feel valued and supported by their leaders, job performance is likely to increase. Coaching can help in the area of job performance by working with employees to strengthen their areas of weakness or concern.

The bar graph below shows the overall comparison of perceived job performance from test 1 to test 3:

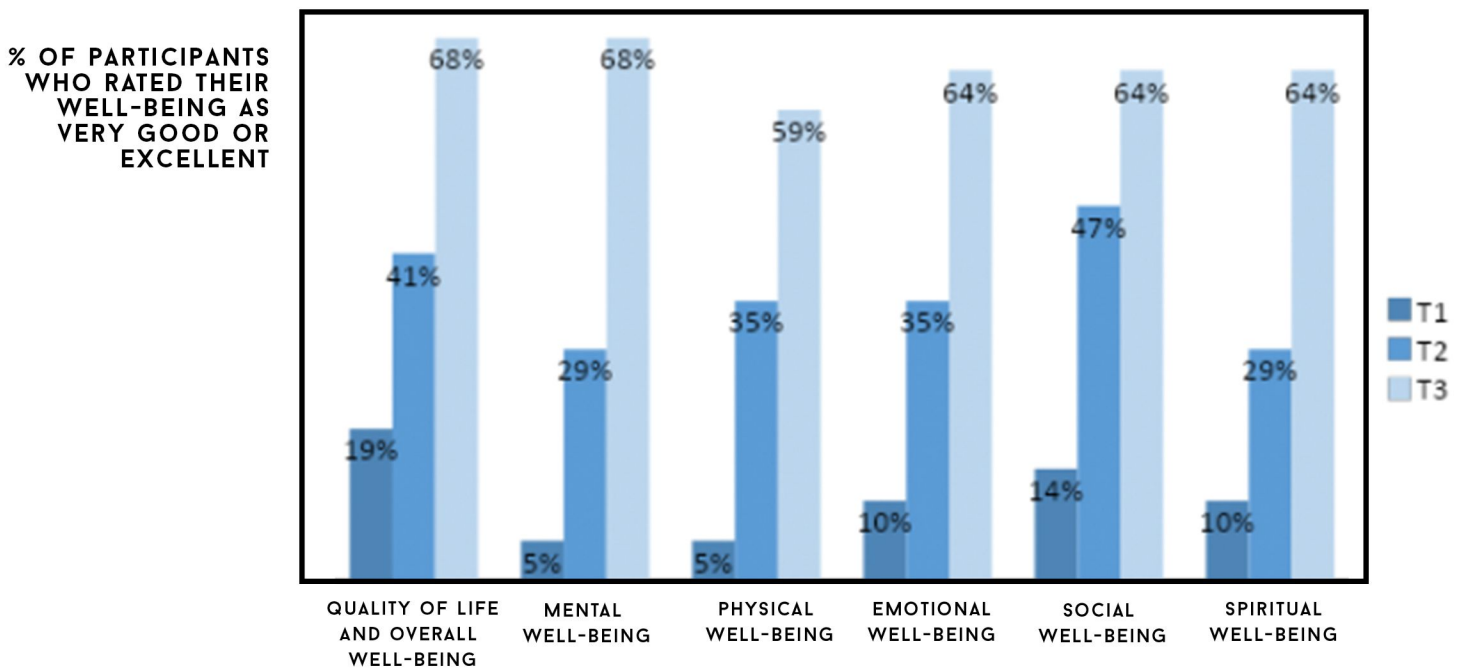


# WELL-BEING ENCOMPASSES MANY AREAS OF LIFE, INCLUDING QUALITY OF LIFE, AND THE AREAS OF MENTAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND SPIRITUAL WELLBEING.

The impact of coaching on wellbeing is increasingly becoming a more practical, cost-effective, client-oriented, and successfully recognized method of helping people improve their psychological well-being.

The following graph illustrates the effects of coaching on well-being:

## EFFECT OF COACHING ON PERCEIVED WELL-BEING



This paper expresses the need to continue to improve employee well-being and confirms the subsequent benefits of how impactful and important health coaching is on mental well-being and perceived stress.

The numerous benefits of coaching, and of our 12 Weeks to Wellness program in particular, are being increasingly demonstrated to improve all areas of wellness, including physical, emotional, and social.



# A LITTLE ABOUT 12 WEEKS TO WELLNESS

The 12 Weeks to Wellness coaching programs have been tried, tested, adjusted, and proven over 15 years. We continue to research best practices throughout North America to provide our clients with the most profound and positive coaching experience possible. Our coaching is a powerful, effective method to help bridge an employee's work life challenges and objectives with the solutions that will optimize their well-being, productivity, and performance. All of our coaches are certified as health coaches and each coach also contains unique areas of expertise in fitness, wellness, disease management, stress and resilience, mindfulness, weight management, nutrition and healthy eating. On top of that, each coach has undergone the 12 Weeks' proven coaching application training. They are here to enhance each client's experience by helping to track progress, adjust the course as needed, and provide encouraging and helpful feedback.

## LEARN MORE

We offer multiple types of coaching programs, plus wellness consulting and numerous and varied workshops that are designed to help raise awareness of health issues and provide practical wellness solutions to daily work and life.

For more information on 12 Weeks to Wellness please visit [12weekstowellnesscoaching.com](http://12weekstowellnesscoaching.com)

