

#### FILLING THE GAP FOR EMPLOYERS:

The Eternal Solution of Peer-to-Peer Guidance to Foster Well-Being

Unlocking Human Potential at Work		3
Defining the Sixth Determinant of Health		5
The Hidden Cost of Our Struggles		7
4 Modern Factors that Contribute to Life Challenge	S	9
1. The Rise of the Sandwich Generation	9	
2. Lack of Care Staff	10	
3. Rising Cost of Healthcare	11	
4. Increased Isolation	12	
Making the Case for Peer-to-Peer Support		13
Psychological	15	
Physical	15	
Clinical and Systematic	15	
Human Contact Should Not be a Luxury Good		16
How to Address Life Challenges to Improve Well-Being Outcomes in the Workplace		18
Adding a Peer-to-Peer Solution to your Benefits Package		20



### UNLOCKING HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

An Introduction

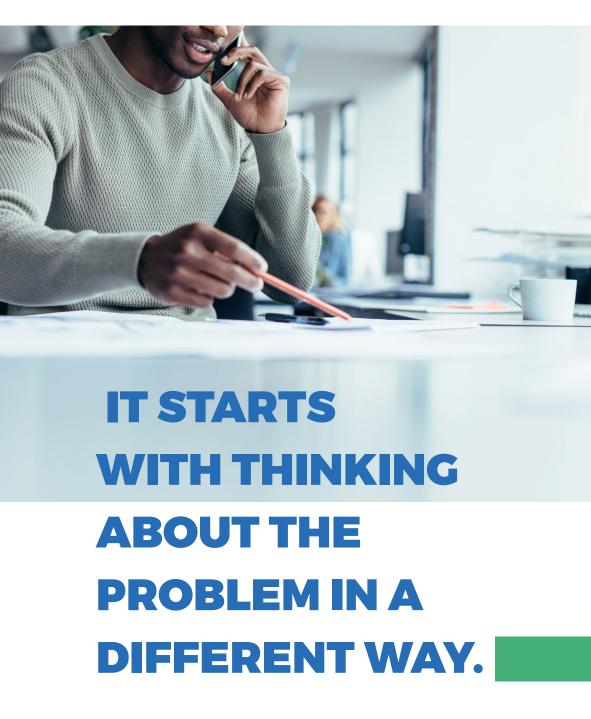
## What does it mean to be "healthy?"

Traditional wisdom defines our health as an outcome, an absence of disease or ailment. However, according to the World Health Organization, health is "a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities."

In other words, our health is a resource that enables our success, happiness, and productivity.







This new understanding of health collides with a growing library of research on employee well-being and its effects on productivity. Presenteeism-or loss caused by sick or distracted employees-costs American companies an estimated \$150 billion annually. Support for employees is too often inadequate or inaccessible, and it shows in the data.

For CEOs, HR Execs, and other corporate leaders, one promising solution to address this growing need for effective, accessible, and affordable support lives in the single most underutilized resource available to us: **Life Experience.** 

Peer-to-peer (P2P) as a support model has a long history fueled by empathy and compassion. When addressing the question, "How can we boost employee productivity while attracting and retaining top talent," P2P support reveals itself as a no-brainer.

Why? Just as "health" has become more holistic in definition, understanding the raw power and potential behind P2P support begins with a holistic look at the situation. We are on the verge of creating a radical impact, and it starts with thinking about the problem in a different way.



#### **DEFINING THE SIXTH DETERMINANT OF HEALTH**

A framework to accurately understand employee health and well-being

Our health and well-being are directly tied to our workplace vitality, focus, and productivity. Simply put, when we are healthy, happy, and free from distractions, we are also free to give it our all.

In fact, employees who identify as "happy" are on average 10-12% more productive than their unhappy counterparts, according to one study.

There are 5 commonly understood factors that determine our health and well-being (Biology & Genetics, Behavior, Social Environment, Physical Environment, Access to Health Services), but these 5 alone do not account for the full picture.

Imagine you are caring for your mother who has Alzheimer's. It's a demanding task outside of your 9 to 5 that you are shouldering alone, and the feelings of stress and isolation impact your ability to thrive both at home and at work.

The concept of health is significantly more nuanced than just an individual's medical care. Our environment, where we live and work, influences our health, but even more importantly, how we confront and cope with life's inevitable challenges and stress ("Life Challenges") has a longstanding and sustainable impact.

## LIFE CHALLENGES THE PRIMARY DRIVER OF PRESENTEEISM



#### THE 6 DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



1. Biology and Genetics Age, sex, and family history are major determinants of an individual's health. The cognitive effects of aging will contribute to an individual's overall health, as will their genetic predisposition to particular diseases.



2. Individual Behavior Diet, physical activity, drug and alcohol use, and hand washing are examples of individual behavior that contribute to health.

3. Social Environment



The social environment encompasses a wide range of components, including societal norms, access to quality education, childcare, exposure to discrimination, and social support. Rates of chronic illness such as diabetes and heart disease have been shown to increase with poverty, and people living in poor or undereducated regions of the country have been shown to be more prone to illness.



4. Physical Environment The physical conditions of the environment in which people are born, live, learn, play, work, and age play a tremendous role in overall health. For example, exposure to contaminants, pollution, and crowding will all have a negative effect on an individual's health.



5. Health Services

The level of access to quality health services will have an impact on health and well-being. Lack of health insurance, the high cost of healthcare, language barriers, and lack of accessibility due to transportation restrictions all decrease the likelihood an individual will participate in preventative or routine care.



6. Life Challenges

Experiencing a Life Challenge is inevitable throughout a person's lifetime, including caring for aging parents, dealing with grief and loss, natural disaster loss, addiction of a loved one, and cancer of a loved one. Access to and the degree of which an individual connects to another person during Life Challenges has a direct impact on health.



#### THE HIDDEN COST OF OUR STRUGGLES

When someone experiences a Life Challenge, it affects us all.

Life Challenges can take a tremendous toll on our emotional and physical health. These symptoms have a ripple effect across our entire life, from personal relationships and family life to performance at work.

Diminishing workplace resilience is one pronounced example of how Life Challenges can affect us at work.

Defined, workplace resilience is "the ability to withstand, recover and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands." Now more than ever, our ability to stay 100% in the workplace is under threat.

Stress is linked to declines in mental health, obesity, illness, and addiction. For many, Life Challenges create a rift between those experiencing the challenge and those who are not. Individuals dealing with underlying turmoil may feel others do not relate or understand. They struggle to deal with the realities of their new normal while feeling isolated from many colleagues or friends.

Of course, it is impossible to divorce the effects of Life Challenges from an individual's professional performance. The total annual costs related to absenteeism average \$84 billion for U.S. businesses. Those costs, however, pale in comparison to the financial impact of "presenteeism," which tally up to a staggering \$150 billion a year, according to the American Productivity Audit.

# LIFE CHALLENGES HAVE A RIPPLE EFFECT ACROSS OUR ENTIRE LIFE.

Presenteeism is the effect of employees being physically at work, but not having the ability to perform their duties at full capacity due to illness, stress, or other emotional distractions. A comprehensive, year-long study by Cigna revealed that three-fifths of U.S. workers across industries and employment type regularly work while sick or dealing with personal matters.

On average, employees report going to work distracted and unable to perform their duties optimally more than twice as often as they miss work. Sixty-two percent admitted to being less productive on those days, and 75% admitted their inability to perform their best concerned them.

In addition to loss of productivity, sub-par performance, and higher levels of fatigue, presenteeism creates dangerous physical conditions for distracted workers and their colleagues. Workers in industries such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and energy can make dangerous and even fatal mistakes when working with heavy equipment or other machinery and tools.

"The survey demonstrates very clearly what every employee knows," said Jodi Prohofsky, senior vice president of operations for Cigna's health solutions unit, "that life impacts work and work impacts life."

#### CAREGIVING:

A GROWING CONCERN

IN THE UNITED STATES

Those who are caretakers for a sick child or aging parent, for example, report nearly overwhelming levels of stress across all facets of their lives. This stress has a huge cost on their personal relationships as well as their own well-being. 83% of caretakers surveyed by the American <u>Psychological Association</u> stated they struggle to take care of themselves.

43.5 million Caregivers in the U.S. have provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last 12 months.

40 to 70 percent of family caregivers have clinically significant symptoms of depression. About a quarter to half of these caregivers meet the diagnostic criteria for major depression.

Family caregivers spend an average of 24.4 hours per week providing care, with nearly one in four of them spending more than 41 hours





The megatrends impacting corporate health and well-being today



Life Challenges are not new. However, the number of people experiencing them is. The following factors outline some of the key drivers of this unfortunate trend.

### 1. THE RISE OF THE SANDWICH GENERATION

With improvements to our healthcare services increasing life expectancy, combined with the sheer size of the Baby Boomer generation, our population is aging like never before. By 2035, experts project that Americans over 65 years old will outnumber those under 18 years old for the first time in our history.

Consider also the Great Recession and student debt crisis that still affects the other end of the population scale. In the middle, is the newly defined "Sandwich Generation" of middle aged and young adults who are either raising young children or financially supporting a child over the age of 18, while also physically or financially supporting at least one elderly parent.

According to a study by the American Psychological Association, adults ages 35-54 feel more stress than any other age group as they balance care for both their aging parents and growing children, with nearly 40% of adults in this age group reporting extreme levels of stress and overextension. Women in this population, in particular, feel more extreme stress than any other group.

## 2. LACK OF CARE STAFF There is currently a professional nursing shortage across the U.S. that the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts will persist through 2025. According to a report from Moody's Investors Services, the southern and western U.S. are primed to be most heavily impacted by the shortage than the rest of the country, with the highest prevalence in Georgia, Florida, Texas, and California. This shortage means that family members may need to inhabit the role of caregiver for their loved ones. Without an empathetic support system, these caregivers are more prone to feelings of isolation and increased stress, which can cause issues both at home and at work. **HELP IS Z** LifeGuides™ 10 | FILLING THE GAP FOR EMPLOYERS



## WE NEED A WAY TO CONNECT 4. INCREASED ISOLATION Technology has given us more access, but does it give us more social and empathetic connection? At a time when the internet is credited with making the world smaller and more social than ever, social cohesion in the physical world has decreased. This is a natural progression of modernization, as societies have moved away from tribal and village living toward suburbs, and as automobiles have eliminated our reliance on the greater community for resources. Similarly, touch screens have made it possible to interact with family and friends around the world at the push of a button, increasingly nudging our social lives into digital spaces. These rising megatrends culminate form a single narrative that impacts all employers today: Employees need access to non-threatening, relatable, affordable, effective, and empathetic support. Now more than ever, we need a way to connect with each other as we maneuver through Life Challenges. CLife Guides 12 | FILLING THE GAP FOR EMPLOYERS



#### MAKING THE CASE FOR PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

Why rediscovering social connection is what we all need

Social connection is a key factor in our survival.

It's not just hearsay – studies have shown that people with strong social ties have a 50% lower mortality rate. The evidence that positive social connection improves our health–the resource enabling our success, happiness and productivity–is validated by several different perspectives:

#### Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

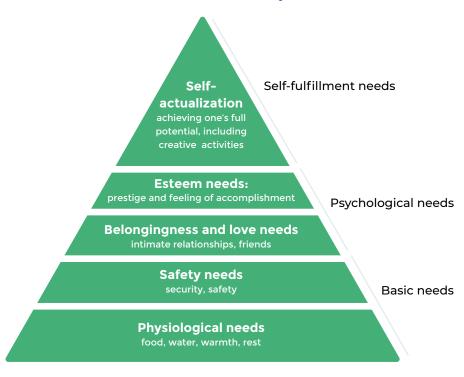
#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

Abraham Maslow's
Hierarchy of Needs
is a widely accepted
motivational theory
in psychology.
According to Maslow,
belongingness and
strong social ties are a
necessary component
for us all to reach
self-actualization. In
other words, we need
friendships and other
relationships to perform
at our best.

#### **PHYSICAL**

Time and again, studies have demonstrated that social connections have an impact on our physical health as well.

According to the Mayo clinic, strong friendships have shown to be associated with lower blood pressure and a healthier body mass index (BMI).



#### **CLINICAL AND SYSTEMATIC**

Some of the most telling evidence for the potential of P2P support comes from real world applications. One landmark study of peer support among people with diabetes demonstrated significantly positive results. Peer support, defined as "support from a person who has experiential knowledge of a specific behavior or stressor and similar characteristics as the target population," reduced problematic health behaviors, depression, and, in several randomized controlled trials, contributed to improved diabetes management among those in the program. Even more optimistic, those apart of the study who shared their wisdom also experienced positive outcomes. Of note, too, this P2P model was described as much less resource intensive than support from highly trained, clinical professionals.

Beyond this revealing example, Alcoholics Anonymous may be the most well-known example of the potential for P2P support.



#### **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:**

THE MOST WIDELY KNOWN P2P SUPPORT SUCCESS STORY

Almost 85 years after its founding in 1935, AA remains one of the most recognized and successful peer support programs worldwide. Today, there are more than 115,000 established groups across the world.

Generally, participants in AA are paired with seasoned "sponsors" who have been in their shoes and have succeeded in the 12-step program. This peer-to-peer system is foundational to the relatively large success rates this program produces. According to a recent AA membership survey:

31% OF MEMBERS WERE SOBER FOR LESS THAN A YEAR'S TIME

24% WERE SOBER FOR BETWEEN ONE AND FIVE YEARS

12% WERE SOBER FOR BETWEEN FIVE AND 10 YEARS

33% WERE SOBER FOR 10 OR MORE YEARS

Solutions to the five traditional determinants of health revolve around concrete behavioral, societal, and environmental resolutions. Life Challenges present an added obstacle of lacking clear delineation, tidy definitions, and guaranteed paths to recovery. However, the one solution that serves as a cornerstone for recovery no matter which Life Challenge individuals are facing–from dealing with a parent with Alzheimer's disease to struggling with a child who faces addiction–is empathetic support.

Traditionally, the challenge has been finding and accessing this support.



#### **HUMAN CONTACT SHOULD NOT BE A LUXURY GOOD**

An opportunity to improve access to trained, empathetic support

A 2018 study around mental health support revealed that in-office American mental health services are inaccessible to a large portion of the country. High cost, limited options, long waits, and accessibility all prevent people from finding the support they need.

Clearly, a new way to support the emotional well-being of our population is needed. Human contact should not be a luxury good. Peer-to-peer support fills this gap.

Peer-to-peer support has long been considered one of the most effective methods of treatment of behavioral health problems. Nonprofessional, nonclinical assistance from individuals who have experienced similar conditions or circumstances is proven to help others achieve long-term recovery. Peer support provides an opportunity for people to share personal experiences, coping strategies, and firsthand information about treatments, successes, and even failures.

According to the American Journal for Preventative Medicine, peer support improves quality of life, engagement, and chronic conditions, decreases hospitalizations, and reduces the overall cost of health services.



For those experiencing a health crisis themselves or of a loved one, peer-to-peer support provides the companionship, expertise, and emotional support that medical treatment alone cannot provide. Peer support, then, functions as a bridge between medical and emotional needs.

A companion not only provides an understanding audience, but also brings a degree of non-clinical expertise for managing Life Challenges. Consider the challenge of losing a home to a natural disaster. Speaking to a peer, called a Guide, who has, experienced this trauma can provide both the empathetic support, as well as guidance for navigating logistical landmines, such as insurance and coverage, in order to get back individuals back on their feet. This is more highly specific support than either a mental health professional or a friend would be able to provide.

Still, peer support is too often inaccessible for many Americans. If social connection is necessary for our well-being, then employers have an opportunity to make an enormous impact by providing this support to their employees.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHALLENGES AND COMPANIONSHIP

"The challenged life may be the best therapist," says Gail Sheehy, journalist and author of the groundbreaking book Passages, an examination of the way individuals perceive the stages of their lives. Through her decades spent studying grief and its effect on people, Sheehy believes companionship is the most effective tool for journeying towards recovery. "People in grief need someone to walk with them without judging them."





## FULL, HOLISTIC CARE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES IS A BENEFIT AS CRUCIAL TO HEALTH AS VISION, DENTAL, AND MEDICAL CARE.

Your organization can immediately cultivate a culture of caring by implementing a peer-to-peer support program. There are several things to consider when you do, so here are some helpful tips for proper management:

Ensure employees have a clear understanding of all aspects of your program, especially around liability and confidentiality.

Promote the positive benefits of peer-to-peer support. Most often, asking for help is the most difficult step for individuals to take. Make it clear that peer-to-peer support is valuable, confidential, and stigma-free.

Make it simple. The right peer support program makes it fast, easy, and flexible for employees to utilize.

A personalized turnkey solution will handle the implementation, peer matching, and administration so you don't have to.



### ADDING A PEER-TO-PEER SOLUTION TO YOUR BENEFITS PACKAGE

Adding a peer-to-peer solution to your benefits package should be simple, effective, and seen as a major asset by employees. It demonstrates your commitment to the well-being of your workers, strengthens your culture of caring, and enhances your organization's competitiveness for attracting and retaining talent.

LifeGuides provides a robust network of Guides with a wealth of experience in navigating Life Challenges.

Our peer-to-peer matching technology removes the struggle of making the right connection and reaching across the chasm yourself. This is more highly focused than a support group—which can lack precise specificity and suffer from disruptions—and more personal than an online forum—which lacks consistent and vetted insight from trained professionals and is usually self-regulated.

A peer-to-peer support solution ensures confidentiality and completely personalized care. Guides have experienced the Life Challenge and are trained in how to offer the right support and guidance to people in need in the same situation. Guides and employees interact regularly via phone calls and messaging on a timetable that works best for employees from the comfort of their homes. This ensures more frequent and consistent interactions and a faster, stronger path to recovery and coping.





## Enhance Your Culture of Caring Today

Life Challenges are often out of our control. They are stressful, messy, and can leave us feeling helpless. How we cope with Life Challenges, however, is in our control. The two most important words in the English language to help us do this are, "I understand." CEOs, HR execs, and other corporate leaders: It's time to help employees unlock their full potential.

Lifeguides can help.

**Let's Talk** 

