



How People Professionals Can Create Remote Working Wellness

A Guide



Foreword, by Jessie Pavelka



The world is changing right in front of us, but the pace in which we see things and how we experience them is completely different. Changing old beliefs and behaviors for new ones is by no means a small task; it requires consistent external support and reinforcement along with an openness and willingness to learn. Only then can there be an internal shift in reality.

In today's world, with an increase in remote working, company culture is at risk. But equally, there is an opportunity to reflect and reshape how your organization operates not only in functions and teams, but even more importantly as human beings trying to adapt and thrive.

Our aim in Pavelka is to support individuals, teams and organizations as they step into what could be the new normal. With companies across the globe switching to remote working we have to be aware of and curious about the routines and practices that keep us connected to ourselves and one another. Remote working can give people the freedom to construct a healthy environment and a positive experience. Yet this exciting opportunity comes with new challenges - the challenge to understand how, just as when working in a typical office setting, beliefs and behaviours impact reality. Is the person able to separate their work from their life? Do they still feel motivated and engaged in the wider organisation? And crucially, do they get lonely - and can they recognise this, understand it, and react to it?

To answer questions around remote working and wellness, we've come together with experts and our talented team to provide support during these uncertain times. This report is an expression of our passion and purpose to serve human beings within organizations, in their pursuit to feel good and do good.

We hope this resource helps you navigate toward solutions.

Let's do what's right for our people - and do it really well.

Best,

Jessie



Focusing on health and wellness as remote working becomes commonplace

As the new decade began, the number of those working remotely was increasing. In the UK, more than 1.54 million people worked from home for their primary job in 2019, compared to just 884,000 in 2009. In the U.S. it has grown by 91% in the last ten years.

Doubling numbers in a decade make it clear that remote working works, for both people and businesses. It's something that's already well understood by companies that rank as the best places to work and it's a strong preference of the workforce itself.

But remote working isn't simply convenient for both sides – studies show that it's effective in terms of both productivity and employee satisfaction.

For most people, remote working means home working. The reality of working at home brings light to an entirely new mental, physical and experiential landscape to people's lives – and in 2020, this has become something that many organisations have been forced to adapt to, not necessarily through choice.

That a responsible business or organisation needs to take care of the health and wellness of their people should be an assumption to make in the year 2020. Yet having people in a remote working situation means an added challenge to this premise, with potentially a notable shift in the way that this is achieved.



A report by Zapier.com published at the end of 2019 revealed that

74%

of the workforce would prefer to

QUIT A JOB

for one that offers remote positions

A 2-year case study by Stanford professor Nicholas Bloom with Ctrip (China's largest travel agency) noticed a



14% RISE

in productivity and an

increase in actual hours worked amongst the remote study group

According to the American Psychological Association remote work can

**INCREASE
EMPLOYEE
SATISFACTION**

when implemented correctly



The UK Office of National Statistics reported that

16%

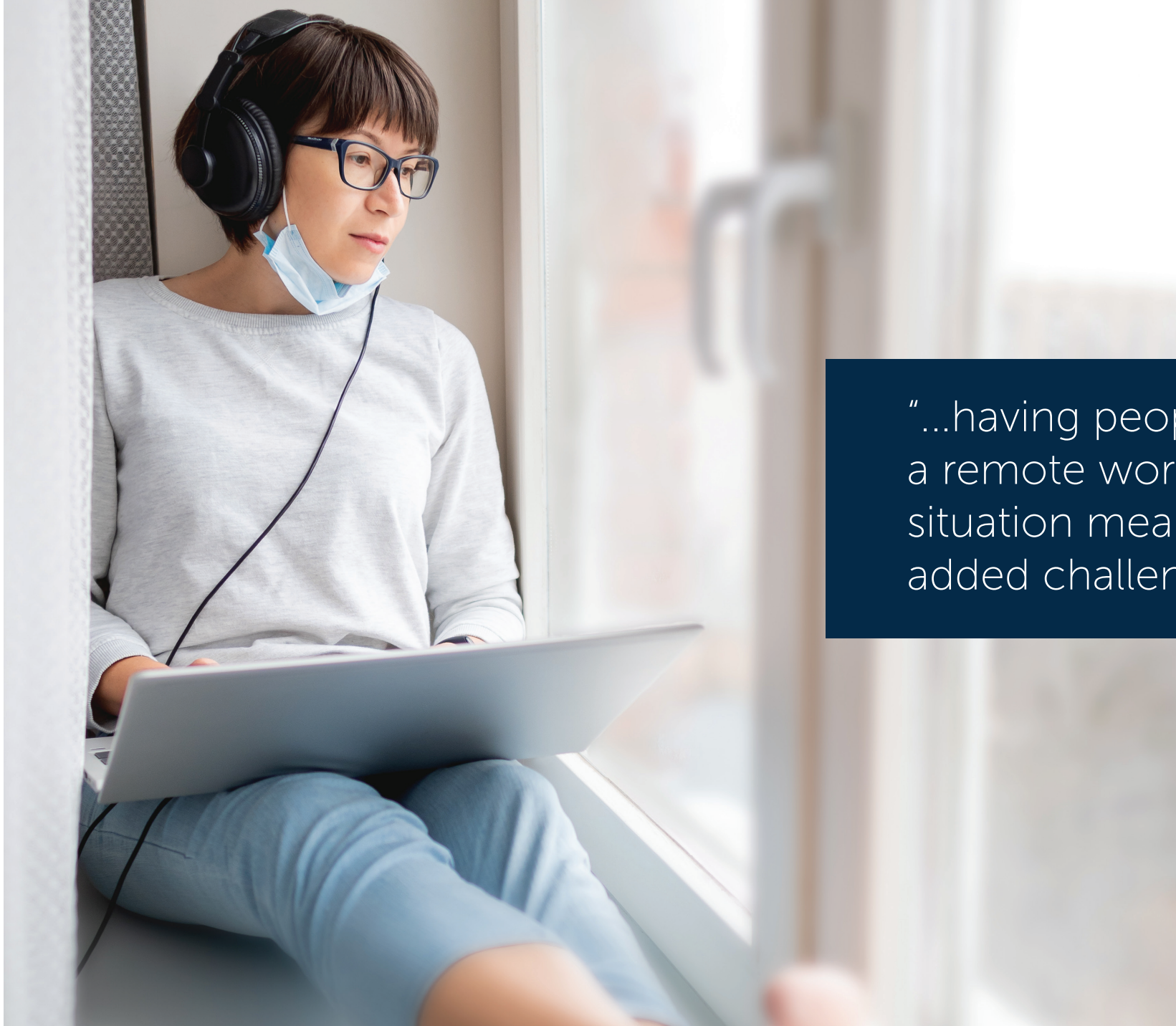
of adults reported feeling

LONELY 'SOME TIMES'

equivalent to around

9 million adults suffering





"...having people in a remote working situation means an added challenge."



In a new era of working environments, prepare for fresh perspectives to health and wellness

One consequence of remote working may seem simple, yet the impact can be enormous: loneliness. The feeling of being 'lonely' is so common that it has become minimalised or seen as a weak emotion – yet it can have a serious impact on health. Working at home can uncomfortably blur the lines between professional and personal life, with employees feeling unable to switch off and simply stop working.

While the negative impact of working remotely must be recognised and attended to, the remote working experience can be hugely positive to health and wellness – as long as there is a culture that pays attention to nurturing it.

Accepting this viewpoint is one thing. But how can leaders, like you, suddenly shift focus from 'in the room' to 'on the screen'? How can you keep the wheels turning and productivity rolling as well as making sure that each one of your team is feeling included, valued and simply 'heard'?

In your people's busy working lives, how can you balance the emphasis on health and wellness with the realities of their free time? And during both an increase and evolution in how people work remotely more often, how can you ensure it functions for those outside the standard office location.

With a remote working experience there is even more need to support your employees and teams with a 'how to' work well from home, in terms of their wellness. The need for accountability via disciplines and boundaries has never been greater for your people to understand and implement.

Particularly with a new comfort with remote working and a distinctly changed mindset after Covid-19, there will be a permanent shift in operations, experiences and policies. This will no doubt create more work initially, but in the long run there is real potential in building a stronger and more efficient workforce that has the right resources at their fingertips, both virtually and in the environment that surrounds them.

At Pavelka, we passionately believe that in order to achieve this, it means looking at not only each person's physical and mental wellness, but at how people are supporting and staying connected to each other. This goal becomes even more crucial with remote working.

It also needs to be acknowledged that each individual has the ultimate responsibility for their own health and wellness, but with the right support and resources, leaders can instigate the suitable conversations and activities that highlight an all-round understanding of how each person can look after themselves but still have the ability to notice and support their team members.

No matter whether your organisation has 5, 50 or 5,000 people, or whether your people have always worked around the world or have just begun to work from home, they all need support.

With this guide, we hope to provide a positive framework that people professionals and leaders of all kinds can use to ensure that health and wellness remains at the cultural centre of your remotely working individuals and teams.

The Four Elements

Our Four Elements provide a clear framework of how health and wellness can be approached, maintained and plugged-in to daily life. They are not prescriptive, as they let each person decide what it means to them. They are not there to turn to in challenging times, nor should they be thought of as a quick-fix. Instead, they can be seen as a guiding checklist to use every day so that each individual can ask themselves if they have considered each one - and how it has supported their goals.



Eat: Food heals, nourishes and nurtures our bodies and our minds. It brings us together, connecting us to ourselves and the world around us.



Sweat: Each day we have an opportunity to live through our bodies. We must make time to give ourselves the gift of movement.



Think: Awareness comes when we take the time to consider our actions, words and take a beat, a breath, a moment to consider. There is great power in simply being in the moment and focusing on the 24 hours you are in.



Connect: Connection to ourselves, another person, a group or something greater than ourselves (whatever that means to each individual) helps you thrive by giving a sense of perspective on our own lives and ensuring that we see the bigger picture.

While it's the combination of The Four Elements all together that create a holistic and inclusive wellness programme, each one provides an identifiable theme that allows a clear focus. The aim is not to simply 'fix problems', but to impact both the individual's reality and the organisation's workplace culture. By transforming beliefs and behaviours in small steps, there can be a big shift in reality for both the person and the organisation.





Eat

Supporting what colleagues and employees are eating as they work remotely can be a challenge. From the side of the individual, the distraction of food and 'quick hits' of snacking can be difficult to avoid. Yet conversely, working remotely can make it easier to make good food choices - and the choice is key. A toolkit released by Public Health England says that "employees are more likely to make healthier choices about physical activity and diet if they feel supported by their employer. An open and inclusive workplace culture helps to tackle the stigma of physical and mental health."

The toolkit emphasises that "as employers begin their journey, the first step should be to engage with employees, involving them from the very beginning to create an approach that will work best for them."

There is no secret to healthy eating – fruits and vegetables are good, processed food is bad. Your people are well aware of the 'what', but would benefit from the how and the why. Wellness initiatives and programmes around not simply nutrition, but inspiration and decision-making being vital for their wellness and the impact this has on performance, energy levels and mood.

There's no reason why remote workers should be left out of the healthy-eating conversation. Online lunch-and-learns are one efficient way to remain in touch and discuss how each person can enact positive change in what they eat and how they see eating.

When working at home, it's all too easy to bring lunch onto the desk and barely notice that you are eating at all – or literally forego a real meal. Making sure that remote workers not only have a proper lunch but also get active during their lunch is key. These are very simple changes in behaviour to make, but the difference in impact is huge – particularly when done at an organisation-wide level.

Bringing the Eat Element into Your Teams



With the impact that what we eat has on our physical and mental health, employers have to ensure that the remote working experience is not 'out of sight, out of mind'. If anything, more attention should be paid to those outside the office, with a supporting program that takes into account the needs of remote workers.

But it doesn't have to be too macro throughout - it still comes down to how are you going to focus on the individual. Having a wellness plan that takes care of the simple questions, whether it's asking if they are eating healthily, are they feeling satisfied or do they have concerns?

The Eat element is all about the relationship that people have with food. It's not about being prescriptive or referring to diets, but making small and sustainable changes that improve that relationship.



Ways to bring in the Eat Element:



1. Find experts who can talk about the topic, from the basics up. Even conversation starters such as how you organise your cupboards and how you manage eating through the day can bring focus.
2. Have one of the team - not necessarily a leader - step up and be a champion of the cause. In our program we call them the Pavelka 'Pioneers' - individuals who love to get involved and support their team with new initiatives and ideas.
3. Run an 'Eat Challenge' - find an agreed theme and have a Pioneer lead the Challenge. It lets everyone centre in on a particular movement and provides a convenient hook to turn back to and keep the Eat conversation going.

A 2019 survey by Reed discovered that

68%

of people

DO NOT TAKE

what could be called a

FULL LUNCH BREAK

instead focusing on

eating quickly

and getting back to work



Bristol University's research showed that **getting active** during lunchtime serves to enhance **CONCENTRATION & PRODUCTIVITY**



A reputable **U.S. research study**

conducted by

Nicholas Christakis

and **James Fowler**

found that **good**

behaviors "spread"

within social groups





Sweat

Being a remote worker can mean that your commute is from the bed to the desk - and desk-based workers have physical issues to address in the entire body. Musculoskeletal pain – in particular of the neck – down to deep vein thrombosis are common consequences of prolonged immobility.

With the whole body under attack from a sedentary working routine, solutions must be in place - and they don't need to be complex. Serious realities in negative, well-known health issues can potentially be combatted with small changes in behaviour.

It needs a program of support, with effort made in awareness and changing behaviours – not necessarily a full-on exercise schedule but a programme that starts with movement as a whole, from standing workdesks to allowing employees time to exercise 'on the clock' to put the concept of movement higher on the daily agenda.

Bringing the Sweat Element into Your Teams



Sometimes the gift of movement can be the greatest thing that we give ourselves. But we all need the motivation to make it happen! So often in the professional world and scenarios of driven remote workers, the day can fly by, with the mind bursting to full. Exercise and movement is the chance to get out of our heads and into our body - and it is something that can happen through the day. A moment in the morning that's dedicated to our body can set the tone for the day. Short breaks, stepping away from the desk, stretching, and walking outside are the small changes in behaviour that impact a big change in reality.

When good habits are in place then it's possible to make exercise part of the workplace community and conversation. Motivating people toward the Sweat Element can lift the whole team and organisation to a new pathway of wellness.



Ways to bring in the Sweat Element:



1. Remote workers don't lead to a cost for a desk, space, electricity and office perks. Give that cost back to the employee in terms of exercise equipment and/or subscription to a fitness or wellness app.
2. Offer exercise webinars, whether yoga or something more intensive. If a team-member is an avid Pilates guru then see if they would like to lead the action.
3. Continually raise the topic - ask individuals how their morning begins. Would they greatly benefit from 20 minute's walking outside as a form of 'commuting' that gets their body moving before the day starts?

The U.S. National Health Institute's paper on workplace-based exercise intervention states that **"musculoskeletal pain is a threat to productivity"**



Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading **cause of death** for both men and women in the **United States** yet even just walking for **30 minutes a day** can increase your cardiovascular fitness



Research published in the **British Medical Journal** found that **sit-stand workstations** could improve markers of health and even **boost work performance**





Think

The phrase 'work-life balance' is well-known - but with remote working it's not so much about a balance as it is managing two separate states, with a clear dividing line between them; work-life separation.

The inability to unplug after work can be the single biggest struggle for remote workers with disturbed sleep another big problem.

The pressures of work are common stress triggers, but it can be even more difficult for remote workers to find clear boundaries and separate work and life. For those working at home it's not a worry if they 'bring the work home' - which can make it harder to disconnect when the workday ends.

The inability to switch off one's mind and stop working in the evening, can lead to loss of sleep. Losing sleep leads to health risks and an obvious lack in productivity. Those working remotely need clear guidelines on when and how to step back, step away from the work and have an understandable evaluation of expectations and how they think about work at home.

Experiencing uncertainty and feeling pressures is something that organisations must proactively manage, and instil a programme that supports people working remotely. Support equals motivation, engagement and productivity – wins for everyone involved.

Employers cannot afford to ignore people's mental health in the workplace - including remotely.

Bringing the Think Element into Your Teams



Remote workers can thrive when given the right support and when they understand their own path to wellness. As well as the stresses and pressures that a career brings, remote workers have a new dimension to come to terms with. With the separation of work and life gone in an instant, employers need to consider what supportive framework is in place to help their people.

What is being done to engage, motivate and inspire remote workers? Being away from the organisation's physical centre means being away from many daily touchpoints and experiences that frame the mission of both the individual and the business. Being at home means that the work is always just another room away.

How can you find a balance between ensuring the individual feels well integrated in the organisation, and yet still has the ability to switch off? A program of regular assessment and awareness of your people's mental health is the macro concept, while it's the small interactions and non-work conversations that make it become real.



Ways to bring in the Think Element:



1. Non-work video calls are a simple but impactful way to enjoy human interaction. How much time is dedicated to a working calendar and how much time is given to chatting and relaxing with team members?
2. What barriers are in place to ensure work and life do not just balance, but separate? An email sent from a boss to an employee on the weekend may only be about an action to come later in the week, yet it can take a remote worker out of their personal mental space and trigger them to think about work during their free time.
3. As well as a specific wellness program in place, a kind of 'permanent on-boarding' for remote workers can mean an HR or people/culture department being continually in touch and aware of the person's experience and emotions about their job.



According to
Buffer's State of Remote Work
report, the
inability to unplug after work
was the single
BIGGEST STRUGGLE
for remote workers

Research by
LogMeIn

found
that

46%



of remote work employees
feel pressure
to prove they are
actually working
when at home



2019's Nuffield Health
report showed that
"Where managers found it
difficult to assess employees'
health and wellbeing,
remote workers should
be monitored
through regular communications"



Connect

One of the very top challenges in remote working is loneliness. The challenge is not only the direct emotional impact of loneliness, but the feeling of working alone, with it being common for remote workers to believe that they have reduced visibility and less access to company leadership. Put simply, they can feel left out.

Even small interactions and touchpoints - outside of simple work calls - can lead to a huge impact in more positivity and a feeling of inclusion.

Building rapport with remote workers is crucial, as it builds trust. This rapport comes from getting to know the complete person, not merely the employee. Loyalty and general happiness are gained from feeling part of a positive culture, and giving positive reinforcement. Isolation is an insidious factor that can lead to not only mental health issues but physical problems. The Institute of Occupational Medicine give the following general guidelines to combat feelings of remote and lone worker isolation:

- Provide opportunities for lone workers to meet up and share experiences, concerns and successes, thus reducing stress and isolation.
- Use mechanisms to determine and then drive engagement and trust levels. Consider 360-degree feedback and attitudinal surveys. Ensure that you adopt an open-door policy.
- Get to know lone workers at a personal level and recognise that your lone workers may need you to adapt your approach to their style.
- Initiate "safe and well" checks at the end of each day. Call your lone workers occasionally just to ask how they are.

Bringing the Connect Element into Your Teams



“ The Connect Element brings all of the Elements together and poses the question about how people are connecting with themselves, with groups, and with something greater than themselves - whatever that may mean to each person.

While remote working can give the freedom and personal choices that let a person thrive, it can also lead to a blinkered lifestyle where a person lives evermore inside their head. Broadening the daily experience and connecting socially turns on other lights inside the head and gives a much needed perspective.

Getting out of the house and into nature, connecting with others and hearing about their experiences, helps to make life whole.

”

Ways to bring in the Connect Element:



1. It can be natural to fill a Google calendar with work meetings and work video calls. But how much of the week is spent simply connecting as humans?
2. It doesn't have to be about big annual team-building events, but what are the opportunities for regular connection and group sharing?
3. Where possible, how often can remote workers physically meet? Whether being involved in work meetings or simply casual catch ups, prompting face to face interaction will boost the feeling of reality and inclusion.

According to

Buffer's State of Remote Work

report, the second biggest challenge with remote work was **loneliness**



A report of **1,100 employees** by Harvard Business Review concluded that **remote workers** **feel left out**



Fast Company

reported that one recent study showed that when colleagues spend just **15 minutes** socialising and sharing their feelings of stress, they have a **20% increase in performance**



About Pavelka Wellness

To continue the conversation about your people's well-being, [contact us.](#)

Pavelka Wellness was co-founded by internationally-recognised health and wellbeing expert Jessie Pavelka and motivational specialist Jill Tipping.

Our mission is to place health and wellness at the cultural centre of individuals, teams and organisations.

We do this by bringing focus to beliefs, behaviours and reality: how small changes in beliefs and behaviour create a big impact in reality. We don't do stand-alone 'wellness days'. We don't prescribe strict actions and instructions. What we do is bring a holistic wellness programme that lets each person understand what wellness means to them: we call it a lifestyle for a lifetime.

The programme's framework is The Four Elements; Eat, Sweat, Think and Connect. They are our universal truths - if each person considers how they can best live with each Element, each day, then they will be on their own path to health and wellness. It's a one size fits one approach, with the programme setting people up for their own success.

Whether the programme is delivering live events, webinars and online content, team challenges or activities that can be led by leaders or anyone, The Four Elements provide an understanding of how individuals, teams and organisations can be best supported.

Start the conversation about how we can bring health and wellness into your teams and organisation; email hello@pavelkawellness.com.

Read news and updates on wellness in the workplace [on our website.](#)





For a healthy and resilient workforce.

www.pavelkawellness.com