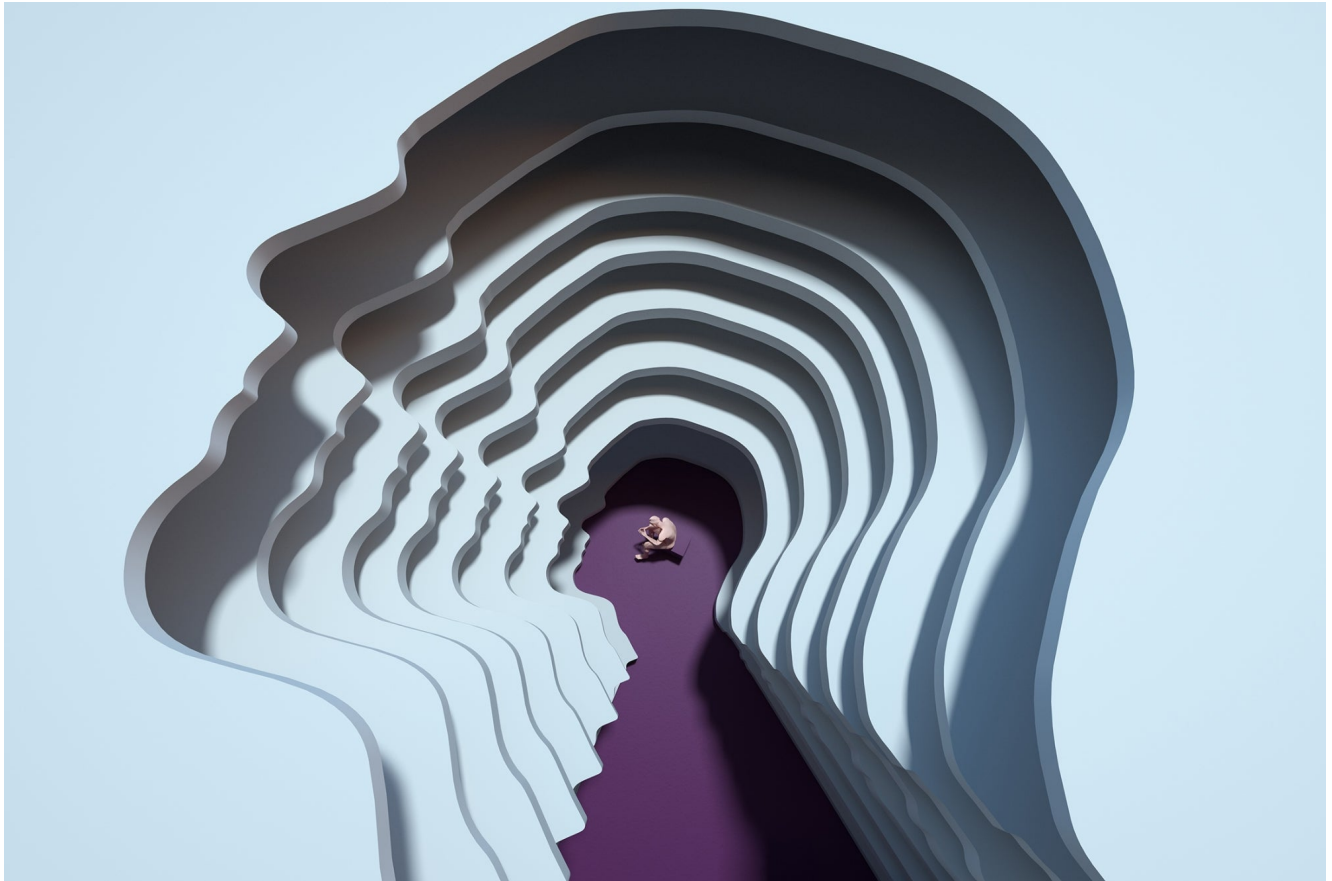


How to Prioritize Mental Health in Yourself and Your Workplace



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How much do you consider mental health in your overall well-being? Many business owners sacrifice their own emotional stability and personal satisfaction for what they believe to be the greater good of the organizations they run. Or they are too lost in all the noise of operating and growing a company even to consider self-care. But there is no rulebook out there that states business owners can't have a thriving business and a healthy mind. It is all about positive psychology.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing. It focuses on factors like hope, happiness and optimism. Positive psychology is a proactive approach to

mental health, not unlike wellness, which is to physical health. We often see a doctor when we feel sick or experience the onset of a disease, which is a reactive approach to physical health.

A more proactive approach is to adopt the kind of healthy lifestyle choices that reduce our chances of getting sick in the first place. The same thing applies to mental health. We might see a therapist if we are in the throes of a mental health crisis, but it would surely be preferable to take a proactive approach to avoid a psychological emergency in the first place.

Dr. Martin Seligman is an American psychologist and leading researcher widely considered the “father of positive psychology.” Seligman coined the term PERMA, an acronym that represents what he asserts are the five essential elements of mental health: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. The concept of PERMA is intriguing, specifically as it relates to the business owner’s emotional journey and mental health.

Applying the concepts of PERMA to ourselves as business leaders is a great step in the right direction. Then, fostering opportunities to advance the PERMA ideology throughout your organization can dramatically enhance your company culture. I mean, who doesn’t want a team of emotionally healthy, mentally prosperous and happy people working for them?

Let’s consider the facets of PERMA and how business owners can apply them to foster positive psychology throughout their organizations.

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P – Positive emotions

Not to be confused with happiness, positive emotions include personal feelings of love, joy and hope, among others. Seligman posits that our thoughts and actions improve when we cultivate and integrate positive emotions into our lives.

First, focus on creating a culture of gratitude to help infuse positive emotions in your business. Recognize and celebrate achievements. Encourage your team to find joy in the work they do and in their interactions with others.

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E – Engagement

Engagement is our ability to achieve a desirable state of flow in which we ditch our self-consciousness and allow ourselves to be absorbed in something we enjoy. It is about being substantively present in the moment rather than focusing on the mental baggage of the past or anxiety for the future.

In your leadership role, provide employees growth and career development opportunities that encourage mastery, such as mentorship programs or advanced skills workshops. Implement ways to instill active involvement, autonomy and personal decision-making in the roles of every employee.

R – Relationships

We all know that deep, meaningful relationships with others are vital to our well-being. Seligman says that humans are inherently social creatures who thrive on feeling valued and supported by others. These social interactions may also stave off cognitive decline and physical health issues.

As a business owner, be an active listener, reinforcing the importance of strong interpersonal relationships throughout

your organization. Create opportunities for team bonding and collaboration.

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M – Meaning

Having meaning in our lives adds purpose and value to our actions. It is that connection with something bigger than ourselves. A sense of meaning might come from the business one runs, the causes one supports or one's spiritual beliefs. Meaning increases personal satisfaction in our daily lives.

Ensure your company mission and vision are meaningful to your team. Create in-house opportunities for employees to contribute to the causes they care about. Let your people know how important they are to the success of your business.

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A – Accomplishment

Being successful at the things we do can dramatically enhance our mental well-being. Accomplishment refers to the final product and the orchestration, mastery and self-motivation that propels a person to achieve great things.

To support a culture of accomplishment in your business, set clear and attainable SMART goals for employees, departments and the organization. Celebrate big achievements, as well as little wins along the way. Understand that setbacks are often catalysts for growth, so provide constructive feedback when employees fall short of expectations.

Proactively incorporating positive psychology and infusing the tenets of PERMA throughout your business can lead to a

healthier, happier and more meaningful existence for you and your entire team.

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