



Bench<sup>®</sup>

# Mental Health Guide

# Guide at a Glance

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# Introduction

At Bench, people are everything. This core principle applies to both the services we provide and the way we work together. As part of that principle, the people team exist to support your well-being, so you can be at your best at Bench—and outside of it.

We've experienced a huge amount of growth in a short period of time. It's exciting! But with exponential growth comes shifts in our culture. Our mission is to keep a people-first culture, always. We want you to feel safe and supported—always.

This guide will give you the resources you need to stay healthy and happy during your time here at Bench.

## HERE'S WHAT'S INSIDE:



- Tools for identifying workplace experiences that can affect your well-being
- A directory of professionals you can contact and connect with to support your mental well-being
- How to use your Bench benefits to get support from mental health professionals
- Information and examples of how Health Days can improve your wellness
- How to support fellow Benchmates when they're going through tough times

But first—let's take a look at why where you work has such a profound impact on your mental health.



# What is mental health?

Mental health is how we think, feel, and behave. It's knowing and accepting yourself, understanding what bolsters your sense of well-being, building meaningful relationships, and being able to meet the challenges and opportunities of day-to-day living.

Your mental health is affected by a number of factors in your daily life. Which, of course, includes workplace experiences.

## How mental health affects your everyday

Your mental health affects how you experience the world—how you think and act in your daily life, and how you relate to and interact with the people around you. It's directly connected to your sense of well-being at any moment, and has an impact on your physical health.

Good times at work—achieving goals, taking on new challenges and connecting with teammates—can boost mental well-being. But during more challenging times—when tasks start piling up and the path ahead is unclear—your sense of well-being can decline. During these times it's critical that you focus on self-care, and make sure you aren't jeopardizing your mental health.

While mental health can be a tricky thing to measure, there are tools available to help you assess where you're at, such as BC's [Here to Help Mental Well-being Screening](#). Otherwise, one of the most important steps you can take is to identify which workplace experiences have an impact on your mental health and well-being.

# Workplace experiences that can affect you

When you feel like you have the right abilities, resources, and support to handle and control your work, you're likely to feel ready and able to meet the challenges you encounter on the job.

But what about the times when you don't feel like you have the right abilities or resources to meet your goals? In those cases, it might lead to stress and take a toll on your sense of well-being<sup>1</sup>.

If you're feeling like you don't have the right support in place, ask yourself if you're experiencing any of the following things.

## A LACK OF VALUES OR PURPOSE

Values are like a compass that points us to a true sense of well-being. If you feel like your personal values are constantly at odds with your employers' values, it will inhibit your ability to do good work. Similarly, if you're feeling unfulfilled, or that your work has no meaningful purpose, you might feel like you're spinning your wheels.

You may be facing challenges with your sense of value and purpose if you feel:

- Like you can't communicate well with your colleagues
- That you seriously doubt your ability to do what you need to do
- As though you'll never be able to reach your full potential
- Like everything in your life is disorganized
- That you're stuck in a rut and there's no way out

If you're feeling stuck, unhappy, or lacking motivation, ask yourself:

- What would it look like if I spent another five years on this current path?
- Should I follow the path I'm on, or find a different one?
- How do the activities that I perform on a daily basis serve me best?
- What are my strengths and how am I using them daily?
- If I'm radically honest, what beliefs, fears, and insecurities are holding me back from living my "best self"?



Leaving these questions unanswered creates gaps in your life that can impact your sense of well-being. So, be authentic with yourself and don't be afraid to confront these thoughts head-on.

## CHALLENGING WORK RELATIONSHIPS

Since you devote many of your waking hours to Bench, you'll often spend more time around your Benchmates than your friends or family. So, how you interact with them will have a significant impact on how you think and feel.

Conflict is bound to arise once in awhile. But in an environment like Bench, where we value communication and always assume good intentions, all conflicts should be resolvable. If you feel like you've reached an impasse, it's important to reach out for help.

If you find yourself in this situation, there are a few things you can do:

- Talk to someone you trust, and relay honestly how you feel
- Speak with your manager for guidance
- Chat with a member of the People Team for some one-on-one coaching

It might not seem like a lot, but even the small act of reaching out to someone for help can have a huge impact on your well-being. Remember—you're never alone.

# STRESS AND ANXIETY

It's only natural when juggling multiple tasks and striving toward multiple goals to experience some amount of stress. But problems arise when we don't know how to manage our stress.

If stress is taking over your life, it's time to have a conversation with your manager or the People Team.

Here are some signs you may need help:

- Your sleeping or eating habits have changed
- You often feel physically unwell (head or stomach pain, frequent illness)
- You become less productive, or have difficulty focusing
- You stop participating in activities that you used to enjoy
- You feel strong sensations of anxiety
- You feel uneasy and apprehensive about future uncertainties

Anxiety is best described as the feeling of worry or fear. It can be long and gnawing or short and sharp—always lingering at the back of the mind or blowing up when you least expect it.

In addition to being aware of your own anxiety levels, it's helpful to understand what it looks like when someone else is experiencing anxiety on the job:

- They have difficulty concentrating
- They experience bursts of anger
- They have a strong aversion to certain situations or environments
- They experience mood swings

If you're having difficulty managing your anxiety—you're not alone. Many people require and benefit from professional care (see the resources guide on [page 25](#)).

# BURNOUT

Burnout is a unique but very common type of work-related stress. It's a state of chronic stress that leads to physical or emotional exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and feelings of ineffectiveness and/or a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Burnout is a cumulative process that manifest in different ways including:

- Chronic fatigue
- Dreading what lies ahead
- Difficulty sleeping or insomnia
- Lack of focus or forgetfulness
- Physical symptoms (chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal pain, dizziness, fainting, headaches)
- Frequent colds and/or illnesses
- Loss of appetite
- A sense of tension and unease
- Feeling hopeless and trapped
- Loss of enjoyment and pessimism
- Isolation and disconnection
- Lack of productivity and poor performance
- Increased irritability

Everyone has their own tolerance level when it comes to dealing with stress. But what's important is to recognize the specific situations and experiences that lead to stress. This helps you to set healthy boundaries, and know when to seek help and support.

To be your best self in both your personal and professional lives, you need to actively invest in your own self-care and mental health.

# DEPRESSION

Depression is a serious and very common mental health condition with emotional, physical, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms. About one in five Canadians will experience during their lifetime<sup>2</sup>.

There's no go-to fix for depression. While some people choose to tackle depression with a healthy diet, exercise, and setting routines and goals, others find that reaching out to a friend, family member, or team member can be an important first step. Even though all of these solutions are effective, we suggest seeking professional help to develop a plan that works for you.

If left untreated, depression can last a long time, and may lead to suicidal thoughts and self harm. If you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, know that you're not alone. It's a common occurrence among those dealing with depression, and it's important to remember that with the right care and support, these feelings and thoughts will be overcome.

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**If you need to reach out but don't know who to talk to, you can also call a support line to talk about your feelings in a safe environment.**

**We recommend [Crisis Line for Vancouver](#) – (604) 872-3311.**

**It's completely anonymous and available 24/7.**

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# ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Everyone has a need to reduce stress, pain, and fill voids in their life. But sometimes what was originally intended to soothe stress can have an adverse impact on our lives when overused.

Excessive substance use is a cause for concern that can lead to addiction. Keep in mind: you don't need to have an addiction to be struggling with substance abuse.

Indicators of substance abuse may surface in different ways, such as:

- Neglecting responsibility at work, school, or home
- Changes in work attendance or performance
- Mood swings or attitude changes
- Altered personal appearance
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Legal issues
- Social problems



There's no shame in confronting or acknowledging a substance abuse. Benchmates who are dealing with substance abuse are encouraged to reach out to the People Team in confidence and without judgment. The People Team is a dedicated, empathetic resource. We're here to help all Benchmates uncover ways their benefits can help resolve substance abuse problems, or to organize a leave of absence.



# Addressing workplace stressors

It can sometimes feel like your mental health is controlling you, and not the other way around. While we always encourage you to seek help from a professional if needed, there are some tactics you can use day-to-day to help keep yourself aligned.

Here are a few small actions that can improve your mental health and sense of well-being—both in a pinch and in the long term.

## BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Deep breathing can be a powerful tool to help you ease stress and reduce anxiety.

### **Belly Breathing**

**Belly breathing** is a simple and easy technique. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position, and put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

### **Square or Box Breathing**

This method consists of four breath segments, repeated while in an upright sitting position. It's a great way to calm your mind before sleep. You can download the [Box Breathing app](#) for guided sessions.

# EMPATHY JOURNALING

Over the course of a day, we experience a wide range of emotions. Often, we don't take time to analyze them beyond in-the-moment reactions. Taking a few minutes at the end of each day to jot down your major emotional reactions and thought processes can give insight into what makes you think and feel the way you do, and to recognize patterns that might be detrimental to your mental well-being.

Start each entry by listing the five emotions that best reflect your day. Follow a format like this:

“Today I felt \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.”

Try to be honest and reflective, keeping in mind that the goal is not to judge your experiences but to acknowledge them.

Example: “Today during the afternoon I was feeling overwhelmed at work due to the workload that I've been assigned lately.”

With journaling, the goal is not to *analyze* your entries or to come up with an immediate solution. It's a means of simply jotting down your thoughts and emotions.

# DOWNLOAD AN APP

There are a number of apps that can help you cope with the mental and physical effects of anxiety and support your overall physical and mental well-being.

Here are some Benchmate favourites:

## Headspace

Hundreds of themed guided sessions on everything from stress to sleep, to focus, and anxiety.

## Calm

It has “emergency calm” which are little 3-10 min sessions designed to reduce anxiety.

## Pacifica

Based on cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness meditation, Pacifica provides daily tools for stress, anxiety, and depression.

# EXERCISE

You’ve seen the research: regular physical activity has a huge positive impact on the way you think and feel. Taking time to exercise frequently will improve your ability to make decisions, react calmly to emotional situations, feel confident, and to lead a better life overall.

Try taking an hour three times a week to go for a run along the Seawall, take a spin class, or hit the gym. Treat this time the same way you would an important meeting, one that you commit to and prioritize in your day or week.



# SETTING GOALS

Setting goals is one of the best ways to establish a sense of self-direction and control. It helps us relate to the future, understand what we want, create a plan to get there, and stay on track to get it done.

When you're overwhelmed with the demands of your personal and professional life, having long-term plans helps put things in perspective. Put aside time to set SMART goals for yourself:

**SPECIFIC**  
**MEASURABLE**  
**ATTAINABLE**  
**RELEVANT**  
**TIME-BASED**



Don't load yourself up with goals that are hard to define or impossible to achieve. You'll only be adding stress to your life. If you'd like more guidance, or would like to learn more about goal-setting at Bench, talk to the People Team for info about one-on-one coaching.

# SETTING INTENTIONS

Intentions aren't to be confused with goals: they're about who you want to be and what you wish to contribute to the world. Intentions are lived everyday, regardless of any goals you have.

Some examples of intentions:

- "My intention is to feel calm, centered, clear minded, healthy, and positive towards myself and others"
- "I intend to be more mindful and aware of my emotions when I am asked to take on new projects"
- "I intend to organize my schedule to make time for the things that keep me happy, healthy and grounded"
- "I intend to operate from a place of love, not of fear"

Intentions are a way to frame the here-and-now and keep you on track toward what you'd like to achieve. Setting intentions can supplement your long-term goals, as well as quiet the nagging feeling that whatever you're doing isn't good enough.

It can be tough sticking to your goals or intentions. Staying on track sometimes means experimenting with various methods until you find what works best for you.

Try setting visual reminders, like a vision board, or placing sticky notes on your mirror. Share your goals and intentions with people you trust, so they can help and support you, and hold you accountable if you don't follow through.

## TASK PRIORITIZATION

Bench is a dynamic, incredibly active workplace, and at any particular moment, you're bound to have a stack of "to-dos" on your plate. Task prioritization is one of the best ways you can ensure that your to-do list stays manageable.

The best approach is to sit down with a teammate or a manager with a pen and notebook and go through your task list together. Having another person there will give you an outside perspective and make certain you don't get hung up on low-priority or even redundant tasks.

### **Here are some suggested steps:**

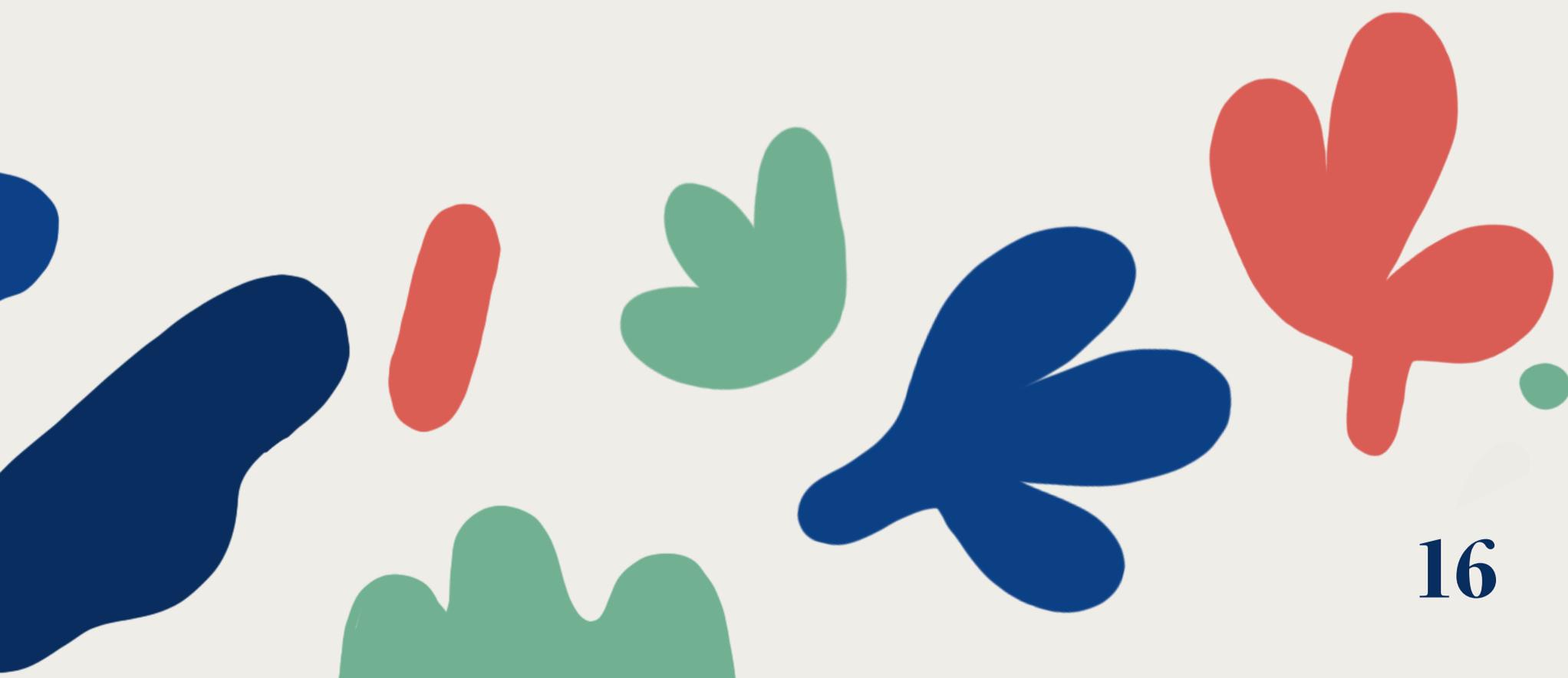
1. Write down all of your tasks
2. Rate them each in terms of urgency and importance
3. Assign each a value in terms of necessity. Ask yourself: "What would happen if I didn't complete this task?"
4. Order the tasks by the effort you estimate will be required to complete them.
5. Remember to stay flexible. Tasks come and go, priorities change. Be ready to adapt.
6. Think about and/or discuss each task, then remove or redistribute them based on what you discover.

You can use old school pen and paper for task prioritization or electronic tools such as [Google Keep](#), [Asana](#), and [Trello](#).

## TALK IT OUT

Sharing with someone close to you can make you feel less alone and help relieve the stress of dealing with challenges by yourself. The person you decide to talk to may be able to offer you some reassurance, support, information, or help you get connected with services in your community or online.

Look for someone you're comfortable with and trust, and before talking to them, think about examples from your life to help them to better understand what's going on and what support you need from them<sup>3</sup>.



# Taking the Next Step

## SEEKING A PROFESSIONAL

Professional mental health workers are trained to handle difficult conversations, ones you might not feel comfortable having with friends or teammates.

If you'd like professional help, [Counselling BC](#) has an extensive list of practices in Vancouver.

Clicking the “Areas of Practice” in their Directory will give you a list of professionals sorted by areas of expertise, so you can find someone that fits closest to what you're experiencing.

Before visiting a professional, think about what you'd like to achieve.

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Do you need help balancing the demands in your life?
- Do you need help figuring out what direction you'd like your life to take (personal growth)?
- Is your mental health reaching a critical state that needs to be addressed immediately?
- Or are you more interested in developing strategies for long-term resilience—dealing with life's ups and downs?

Remember, you may need to see a few different people before you find someone you're truly comfortable with.

# We have you covered

If you are a full-time Benchmate, and you've completed your 90-day probationary period, a wealth of options is available to help support your ongoing mental health and well-being.

## RBC INSURANCE

Under your RBC Insurance plan, you have \$400 per year to spend on psychologists, social workers and other mental health professionals.

This is also the only paramedical coverage category without per-visit caps, meaning that if you would like to see a specialist, you've got some wiggle room in terms of cost.

It's important to remember that this plan only applies to registered psychologists, qualified social workers, and registered clinical counsellors. To be eligible under RBC's plan, the practitioner you're seeing must belong to the regulatory body for the province in which they practice.

Here's a cheat sheet to help you keep track of the professionals RBC will or will not cover:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ✓ R Psych Registered Psychologist   | ✗ CCC Canadian Certified Counselor                             |
| ✓ RSW Registered Social Workers     | ✗ AAMFT American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists |
| ✓ RCC Registered Clinical Counselor | ✗ MFT Registered Marriage and Family Therapist                 |

# LEAGUE

**League** is an app that helps Benchmates manage their RBC Insurance benefits, Lifestyle Spending Account (LSA), and allows Benchmates to connect with healthcare professionals.

Using League, Benchmates can initiate free and confidential chats with certified health, mental wellness, medication, and nutrition concierges.

You can also schedule appointments directly through Marketplace and find discounted services that contribute to your mental and physical well-being.

# LIFESTYLE SPENDING ACCOUNT

We know that ‘wellness’ means something different to everyone, so we’ve created a perk that gives you flexibility in choosing what best contributes to your wellness: the Lifestyle Spending Account.

The LSA allows you to purchase things that matter most to you and your well-being. Whether that’s purchasing a transit pass, signing up for a gym membership, saving up to buy a commuter bicycle, registering for a half-marathon, or finally going to that workshop you’ve been dreaming of attending, we want you to use this spending account to make your Bench experience everything it can be.

# MSP

Psychiatrists are doctors, and typically covered under the BC **Medical Services Plan** (MSP), but you’ll need a referral from your family doctor or mental health program in order to see one.

Many psychiatrists also do counselling. Clinical counselors and social workers are not usually covered by MSP unless it’s through a hospital program or mental health team.

# Taking health days



When you need time away from work to focus on your mental health and well-being, you can always take a health day.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO ASK FOR ONE

Yes—your job is greatly important. But YOU are more important. Don't be afraid to take a personal day when you need one.

When feeling unwell, it's easy to feel vulnerable. But rest assured, your job is not going anywhere. Your team has your back. Always.

We mean it when we say that we want you to be doing the work of your life here at Bench, and we know that you cannot do that when your cup is half empty. Take a health day, get well, recharge, and come back refreshed and ready to be your best self.

Through UltiPro, every Benchmate is assigned Health Days under the Time-Off Section, to be used when needed.

## WHY YOU MIGHT TAKE ONE

“I ran out of the medication I take to control my anxiety and help me sleep. I haven't been able to see a doctor yet, so I've only been getting a few hours of sleep each night. If I could take a day to see a doctor, get a prescription refill, and rest at home, it would set me on track for the rest of the week.”

“I’ve been trying to wrap up all of my clients this week, which means I’ve been working really long hours. It’s making me feel really burnt out, so I’d like to meet someone on Monday to talk about task prioritization and managing my workload. Taking a Health Day will help me get to the root of my burnout and learn how to better manage time and stress in the future.”

“Someone in my family passed away yesterday, and I’m having a hard time processing everything. I need to take a few Health Days this week so I can have some time to grieve.”

You don’t have to provide a comment in UltiPro when you book a Health Day, but as long as you’re comfortable with it, it doesn’t hurt to inform your manager so they can do the best job possible supporting you through the situation. If you don’t feel comfortable speaking with your manager, but would like someone at Bench to be filled in, you can always let a member of the People Team know.

## TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If you’re experiencing deeper, more serious issues in terms of mental health, an extended leave of absence may be necessary. If you feel this is the case, talk to anyone on the People Team

# Supporting your peers



We know from experience that happy, fulfilled individuals form motivated, powerful teams. When a Benchmate faces challenges, supporting each other is what helps us succeed.

It's not always easy to tell when someone is struggling. That's why it's important to be aware in your interactions with other Benchmates, without necessarily demanding the specifics of their personal lives. Try to stay open, and available to have a conversation with a teammate or friend who might need it.

Sometimes it's obvious that a person is struggling, but there's no way to learn the details of what's going on without having a one-on-one conversation. In which case, it's more important to respond sensitively and be a good listener, than try to reach some kind of diagnosis. By being available to have an open, honest, safe conversation with a Benchmate, you're making a huge contribution to the mental well-being of the people you work with.

## EXAMPLE SCENARIO

*"Someone I work with seems emotionally unsettled, and getting worse every day. They often look tired or upset, and seem distracted. I'm worried about them, but not sure what I should say or do."*

### STEPS

#### 1. Exploring the situation

- Tell them they don't seem like themselves, and specifically describe what seems different. "You seem a little down today? Are you doing alright? Would you like to grab a coffee and talk?"
- Avoid making any judgements about what's going on. Instead, give them a chance to talk about what they're going through, and try to be an active listener.

- You might have the urge to offer them advice on what to do. Resist it. The best thing you can do is let them express what is going on. The best steps to recommend are those which would get them further support for their specific situation.

## 2. Moving forward

- Try to guide them toward solutions that might get them back on track, like finding professional help or raising the issue with the People Team. If they're uncertain, offer some ideas, but allow them to choose their own way forward.
- If your colleague is dealing with conflicts or harmful relationships at work, try to guide them towards productive resolutions rather than potentially damaging, spur-of-the-moment reactions.
- Encourage your fellow Benchmate to take regular breaks. Even during times of emotional struggle, the work day is easier to manage when it's broken up. It will also support their focus and concentration.
- Focus on small steps forward. Trying to fix every problem at once can be overwhelming and ineffective.
- Help them prioritize their tasks. Offer to help them go through the task prioritization exercise described in this guide, and encourage them to bring the list to their manager.
- Ask if they've considered taking a health day. It might help if you explain the importance of taking time to recharge and get healthy.

# SEEKING ADDITIONAL HELP

Use this guide as a resource to support your fellow Benchmate. Have they read it? Could they benefit from going through it with you? It can be intimidating to get support from a professional. Offer to help your colleague find a practitioner who might suit their needs, and offer to stay with them while they book an appointment.

# MAINTAINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

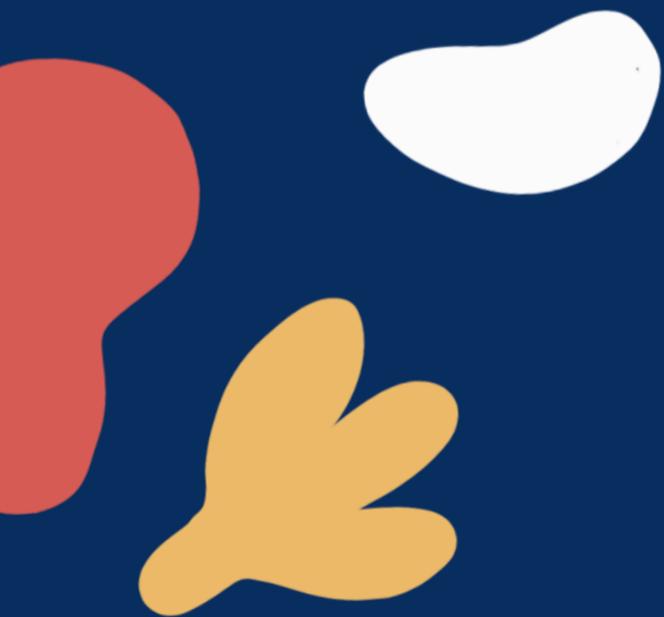
Help your Benchmate to find the resources they need and reach out further for help, but remember that their problems are not your own. The act of helping someone else improve their well-being should never compromise your own.

## TALKING TO COLLEAGUES

You've realized that you're feeling off and you want to regain control of your mental health. If you need to have a safe conversation with someone, the People Team are always available to chat.

Your well-being is a major priority, and they can lend a friendly, helpful ear if you'd like to talk it through. Or if you need further support and don't know where to start, they can help point you in the right direction to find the resources you need.

And remember: Benchmates are not physicians, therapists, or counselors. While they're great starting points for discussing challenges and exploring the help that's available to you, you should always seek qualified professionals for serious mental health concerns.





# Resources

This section points out resources that Benchmates have found helpful for improving their mental health. These have been curated for the purpose of this guide, but none are officially affiliated with Bench.

## APPS

**MY3** is intended for individuals who are depressed, suicidal, and experiencing their darkest days. The app assists in creating a personalized safety plan and trains the user to recognize warning signs in themselves and others.

**Moodpath** asks daily questions in order to assess your well-being and screen for symptoms of depression. The screening progress aims to increase your awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and feelings. After a period of two weeks, the app generates an electronic document that you can discuss with a healthcare professional.

**SAM** will help you understand what causes your anxiety, monitor your thoughts and behaviour over time, and manage anxiety through self-help exercises and private reflection.

**Buddhify** delivers guided meditation exercises which can help you de-stress, sleep better, and become more compassionate and aware in all parts of your life.

**Balanced** is helpful for tracking the things you wished you did more often—and motivating you to actually do them, too.

**Noiz** is recommended for producing pleasant and relaxing background noise, blocking out distractions, and keeping you focused.

**Mend**, considered the “personal trainer for heartbreak”, is a self care app and break-up coach that helps guide users through the day with emotional support, meditation, and exercises.

# CLEARING YOUR HEAD

1. Meditation—Give it a try with apps or join us in person on Tuesdays at 3pm in Wasa for a weekly meditation sitting.
2. Cooking—Preparing food can support mental health by being a creative outlet and a way to channel energy, help build mastery in a skill and a way to express emotions through a different medium. There are a number of websites, [blogs](#), apps, and cooking services to take advantage of.
3. Sensory deprivation tanks—Book 90 minutes to spend some time alone and decompressing entirely free from distractions at [Floathouse](#).

# COUNSELLING

[Willow Tree Counselling](#)—Visit Megan Sutherland for a friendly, non-judgemental conversation. She has lots of experience with the LGBTQ community.

If you are in need of low cost counselling, counselling offered on a sliding scale, or specialized help, Willow Tree has assembled a [masterlist](#) of options available in Vancouver that can be accessed by walk-in, appointment, or doctor's referral.

[Tapestry Counselling Centre](#)—Tapestry is committed to providing exceptional counselling services to people from all walks of life. They are passionate about helping people to heal from abuse and trauma, to recover from depression, anxiety, and grief, to find emotional well-being, and to thrive in the midst of life's challenges.

[Well Women Counselling](#)—Well Women Counselling provides professional therapy for a wide range of mental health and wellness concerns. Their team of qualified therapists provides evidence-based psychotherapy and supportive counselling for women, men, and non-binary/LGBTQ+, for both individual and couples sessions.

**Turning Point Therapy**—The staff at Turning Point Therapy is committed to providing you with a safe, accepting space to reflect, learn, grow, and heal. They offer reduced cost counselling and strive to provide you with a collective knowledge and experience that spans many years and styles.

**Adler Centre**—You may also want to consider the Adler Center on West Broadway. They offer low-cost counselling services to people in Greater Vancouver. You'll work with a counsellor, trained at a Master's Degree level, who is currently completing their internship under a Registered Psychologist.

**UBC Counselling Services**—Meet with Master's Degree level Wellness Advisors for private and confidential help at several locations on campus and in Vancouver.

For plan members of UBC Alma Mater Society and Graduate Student Society, **Empower Me** allows past and present students to connect with a counsellor for support with any type of issue or crisis.

**SFU Health and Counselling**—Meet with a team of Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Clinical Counsellors to assist Students with academic and personal issues at all three campuses located in Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey.

Also offered to SFU Students is the **SSP (Student Support Program) App**, in which Students can obtain counselling and support through the app via chat or over the phone, book an appointment for counselling, or simply browse resources related to mental health.

## DOGS

We almost always have an adorable dog hanging around the office. Go and pet one—petting an animal is believed to prompt the release of a number of “feel good” hormones in humans, including serotonin, prolactin, and oxytocin<sup>4</sup>.



## EXERCISE

1. Spin Studio—[Eastwood](#), voted Vancouver’s best Spin Studio, is in a class by itself, delivering a workout aimed at strength and endurance, in a setting intent to lift your spirits.
2. [30 Days of Yoga With Adriene](#)—If you prefer doing yoga in the comfort of your own home, give this YouTube instructor a try.
3. Run—Going for a run during lunch break can make a huge difference in your day. Try [Runkeeper](#) to help you get started.
4. [Classpass](#)—A Bench favourite, and a great way to try lots of different activities.
5. More Yoga—Some of our Benchmates like to sweat it out just a block away at [Oxygen Yoga and Fitness](#) fusion classes. You can browse the Yaletown location’s classes and book easily online by visiting the link.
6. Tailored Personal Training—Just steps away from Bench, [Innovative Fitness](#) works with clients to develop customized training programs concentrating on goal setting and results.

## EXTENDED BENEFITS

Make a shift from being reactive to being proactive about your health. Eligible Benchmates have up to \$400 per practitioner per calendar year to use on Acupuncture, Massages, Physiotherapy, Naturopaths, and other practices.

# WRITING/JOURNALING

[Morning Pages](#) is a journaling app that allows you to write the things running through your mind. It also uses AI to track your mood and emotions based on your writing. Its creators believe that writing your ramblings helps you create a deeper self-awareness and a mindset of clarity.

Another alternative is journaling with [750 Words](#). It's an online journal that encourages writing every day and tracks things like how easily distracted you are, and analyzes the feelings, themes, and mindset of your words.

[The Five Minute Journal App](#) allows you to spend a few minutes in the morning and evening jotting down the things you're most grateful for every day or lessons you've learned.

## OTHER AWESOME STUFF

- A mindfulness blog called [Zen Habits](#)
- Brene Brown's famous TED talk on [vulnerability](#)
- A TED talk on [Restoring Emotional Authority](#) by Aidan Scott
- Positive Psychology author Shawn Achor believes that [happiness inspires us to be more productive](#)

# Thank You

People are everything. With that comes a promise, and that promise is that we will continue to ensure that mental well-being is openly discussed, destigmatized, and always supported.

Bench only works if it works for the people who work here. We're a diverse company of brilliant people with complex lives and emotions. Always remember: the People Team is here to help you craft an experience of Bench that works for you and your well-being.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and for dedicating your craft, self, and skills to help us create the thing we've decided to call Bench.

Now, let's do good work together—and be happy, whole, and fulfilled while doing it.

