

# PUTTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH ON PAR WITH PHYSICAL WELL-BEING



The adage that a healthy body is a healthy mind is being turned on its head in the workplace, where the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we work. Compelled to adapt to remote or hybrid arrangements on top of the traditional work-from-office routine, many employees struggled to balance it all, leading to fear, anxiety and a rise in mental health issues.

Conscientious companies are aware that mental well-being impacts physical health and productivity in the workplace. They also acknowledge the need to offer better support and care to employees, beyond the occasional well-being webinar.

But mental health is not an easy subject to broach because of the stigma surrounding disorders arising from it. Recognising the need to help employers address this issue as their employees learn to cope with new ways of working, AIA Malaysia has launched its first-in-market Mental Health Solution in collaboration with ThoughtFull, a Southeast Asian-based digital mental health platform, to enable organisations to provide better care and end-to-end support for their employees' mental well-being.

The comprehensive Mental Health Solution has two distinct features: digital access to mental wellness and coverage for mental health benefit.

The first feature, powered by ThoughtFull, provides covered employees with unlimited one-on-one access to professional mental wellness coaches

for daily bite-sized coaching; self-guided learning content and a wellness tracker; mental wellness programmes; webinars and workshops; and a 24-hour wellness hotline for crisis interventions.

The second feature provides insurance cover for employees' consultations, medication and treatment costs provided by a psychiatrist and/or a physician due to a mental health condition. This includes coverage for their dependents and comes with cashless or reimbursement options.

The Mental Health Solution is the latest offering under WorkWell with AIA, which offers a suite of solutions and services to organisations to nurture and improve employee well-being. WorkWell with AIA combines traditional benefits with workforce wellness to help employees achieve overall well-being in four dimensions: physical (live well); mental (think well); financial (plan well); and social (feel well).

"We're seeing more and more members of the workforce struggle with mental wellness, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. It is detrimental not only to the individual's emotional well-being, but also to the nation's productivity," says AIA Bhd chief corporate solutions officer Tung Hsiao Ley.

"Organisations looking to foster a healthy and conducive environment for their employees while staying ahead of the competition would need to play a more proactive role in addressing mental health issues in the workplace. The features within our Mental Health Solution provide preventive

measures and support that employees need to manage and improve their personal stress levels," said Tung.

Increasingly stressful work environments are one of the key contributors to the rise in mental health issues, which have become a global concern. A December 2020 survey by Ipsos found that Malaysian employees had the highest level of stress and anxiety in their jobs. The survey said 74% experienced anxiety due to job security issues while 67% were stressed out due to changes in work routines. But this is nothing new, as some of the issues were already evident in pre-pandemic Malaysia. However, many people still hold back from talking about it or taking any action.

AIA believes employers are in a unique position to ensure their employees feel supported and are able to seek help beyond traditional benefits. Walking the talk and leading by example, it engaged ThoughtFull at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to provide mental health support to its employees.

This resulted in the insurer's employees reporting a 43% average reduction in depression, anxiety and stress levels. Those who engaged with a certified mental health professional through the ThoughtFull app also said they were more positive in their outlook and behaviour.

"It was important for us to be able to support our people to strengthen their resilience so they could thrive through the multitude of sudden and ongoing changes at work and in their personal lives," Tung added. "We worked with ThoughtFull because of their genuine and seamless approach to mental wellness in the workplace and saw firsthand the benefits it brought to our employees. This motivated us to explore how we could bring this service to our corporate clients," said Tung.

With the new Mental Health Solution, companies can access seamless solutions to improve mental well-being, remove the stigma associated with mental disorders and create a safe space at work for their employees to foster discussions on this pressing concern.

"We believe mental health should be given as much priority as physical health. Employers can now feel supported as they prioritise employees' mental health and give them access to support and resources that will help them achieve a better quality of life, resulting in a happier, healthier and more productive workforce. We believe we have achieved a breakthrough in responding to a market need that is very real," said Tung.

For more information on AIA's Mental Health Solution, please visit [www.aia.com.my](http://www.aia.com.my)

## Features of AIA's Mental Health Solution

### Digital Access to Mental Wellness\*



Unlimited 1-on-1 access to professional mental wellness coaches for daily bite-sized coaching



Self-guided learning content and wellness tracker



Mental wellness programmes, webinars and workshops



24/7 Wellness Hotline for crisis interventions

\*Powered by ThoughtFull

### Coverage for Mental Health Benefit



Covers employees for consultations, medication and treatment cost provided by a Psychiatrist and/or a Physician due to a mental health condition



Includes coverage for the employees' dependents



Offers cashless or reimbursement options

