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# Do These 3 Things to Retain Women Employees and Protect Them From Burnout



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“The Great Resignation” and “Quiet Quitting:” these phrases that reflect employees’ growing anti-work sentiment have dominated conversations about the workplace over the last few years. Though none of the attitudes are new, they certainly are more common and more publicized, especially post-pandemic.

There’s a new phrase to add to the mix: “The Great Breakup,” coined by McKinsey and Lean In in their Women in the Workplace 2022 report<sup>1</sup>. In summary, the report says women want more from their workplaces, and many of them are leaving their jobs to find it. Women leaders are also switching jobs at record rates. That may be deeply unsettling to your organization if you are concerned about retention rates, especially of top talent.

This trend should motivate all companies to pay closer attention to women employees’ physical and mental health needs and personal priorities. Awareness is important, but only a first step. To protect women employees from burnout — and keep them on your team — consider these three actions.

## 1. Support Flexible Work Hours

The pandemic had many women burning the candle at both ends as they worked from home, relinquished the home office to their partners, managed health concerns, and acted as their kids’ teacher. This trying time had many women reflecting on the work-life imbalances they had accepted as their realities. Returning to an impossible grind post-pandemic was simply unacceptable. Flexible work arrangements, once a nice-to-have, have become a must-have.

For women to achieve a better work-life balance, consider flexible work schedules like these:

- 1. Flextime allows women to function when they’re most productive** (like mornings, for example).
- 2. Hybrid/remote work is performed completely away from the office part time, temporarily, or permanently.** This option can decrease the stresses of travel and caring for children and can increase capacity for focus and productivity.
- 3. Compressed workweeks reduce the number of days worked per week.** For example, in a compressed work schedule, a woman could choose to work 4 days instead of 5 in corporate settings — as long as she completes her job.

Unfortunately there is still a strong perception among women that flexible work schedules come at a professional cost<sup>2</sup>. Organizations should correct that perception by consistently encouraging work schedule choices. When women are given choices about their work arrangements, they are more likely to find their work not just sustainable, but satisfying.

## 2. Model Healthy Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries at work can be tricky for some women, even if they’re more comfortable doing so in their personal lives. When people care about their work deeply, it’s easy to justify working at night or on weekends, joining meetings and answering emails on days off, or saying yes to more work when already overtasked.

Unclear boundaries at work can eventually lead to exhaustion, disillusionment, and burnout. Here, too, women employees may be reluctant to exercise stronger boundaries for fear of being penalized. They may worry they’ll be passed over for promotion because they didn’t go the extra mile or miss a pay raise because they missed a deadline.

In order for women employees to confidently set strong, flexible boundaries at work, those in managerial positions must lead by example. Managers should:

- 1. Be able to say “no.”** When managers do too much, it can lead to resentment — and that’s poisonous to workplace morale and culture.
- 2. Communicate their needs clearly.** Employees can’t do their best work operating on guesses, assumptions, or suspicions about a manager’s position.
- 3. Be careful not to overshare personal information.** Sharing too much puts a manager’s reputation at risk, and frankly, makes people uncomfortable.
- 4. Act with integrity.** Employees need to see their manager refuse to compromise personal values, beliefs, and opinions to satisfy others.

When women witness their work leaders practicing protecting their boundaries, they’ll be more comfortable practicing the same.

## 3. Offer Mental Health Support Options

Organizations know that the mental health of their employees can’t be ignored. After all, when employees struggle with mental health issues and are absent from work, it has a tremendous financial cost to them<sup>3</sup>. Fortunately, organizations are also realizing that supporting employees’ mental health is just the right thing to do.

Women employees need personalized support when they are struggling with mental health issues. Chances are that the insurance you provide has complications and restrictions, and your employees may find it frustrating to navigate. And on top of that, mental health providers that are accepting new patients are few and far between.

However, when you partner with a mental health care coordination service like **Care Solace**, we can work together to prevent mental health crises, intervene when necessary, and encourage resilience in all employees. Our All-In-One Access will:

- 1. Support your benefits package.** Care Solace can navigate employees’ designated insurance plans and EAPs to coordinate mental health care on their behalf.
- 2. Coordinate all care.** We will find mental health care for all employees and their family members, including those with insurance outside of your benefits package.
- 3. Manage a handoff from human resources.** When needed, employees will have a hand to hold through the entire process to find care.

The McKinsey report concludes that “companies that rise to the moment will attract and retain the women leaders—which will lead to a better workplace for everyone.” Rising to the moment means employers need to take the lead to destigmatize mental health and reduce the friction women encounter when looking for the right help.

When women employees are encouraged to proactively seek support when needed, they’ll be much more likely to experience their workplaces as progressive and caring — and see no reason to leave your organization for something better.

**Let’s talk** about how to support new mom employees’ mental health as they move back into the workplace.

Footnote

1. Women in the Workplace
2. CNBC|SurveyMonkey poll: International Women’s Day 2021
3. The Economic Cost of Poor Employee Mental Health
4. Care Solace

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