

A smiling woman with curly hair is wrapped in a thick green blanket, looking up and to the side with a joyful expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window.

Wise Up

The latest on AI for Mental Health: Brought to you by Wysa

Breaking the cycle of negative thinking with digital interventions

Upholding employee wellbeing priorities in a shifting political climate

Therapist reveals the recipe for a long-lasting, healthy relationship

Navigating panic and anxiety: John's journey through NHS Talking Therapy

How do I support my struggling teen?

Student mental health support in NYC: Ithaca College partners with Wysa

What's your conflict style? Communication strategies to handle disagreements

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Welcome

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our Valentine's issue! We're excited to bring you another edition packed with recent news, the latest insights, and expert advice to support your mental and emotional wellbeing.

In this issue, our Wise News Roundup takes a look into the global AI landscape, covering new developments from China's free DeepSeek model, to AI predicting bed shortages in Indian mental health hospitals, and a WEF report predicting 78 million jobs created by AI by 2030 - there's a lot to explore.

We shine a spotlight on Student Mental Health Support in New York, where Michelle Goode, Director of Health Promotion at Ithaca College, shares why they partnered with Wysa and how student brand ambassadors are driving a peer-led mental health movement on campus.



We also tackle the pressing issue of employee wellbeing in a shifting political and cultural climate. As DEI initiatives face challenges, it's more important than ever to prioritize mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

On a lighter note, therapist, Asia Schmidt, offers expert guidance on the 10 ingredients for lasting love, providing practical advice on fostering healthy relationships.

In our research section, we explore how Wysa's digital intervention works to break the cycle of negative thinking in Singapore.

Curious about your conflict style? Take the assessment to explore your levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness, and learn strategies for healthier communication in both personal and professional relationships.

Smriti returns in our Ask Smriti column, answering your question about how to supporting a struggling teen and knowing when to seek professional help.

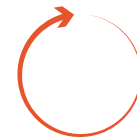
Finally, in a real-life user story, we hear from John, a bar manager who shares his journey with agoraphobia and panic attacks, finding relief using Wysa's AI-driven support.

Thank you for joining us in another issue, and happy reading!

Megan

Megan Kirk, Marketing Manager, Wysa

Wise news round-up



[AI to create 78 million jobs by 2030 predicts WEF report](#)

The World Economic Forum's latest report reveals that AI could actually create more jobs than it displaces. While AI is expected to replace 92 million jobs by 2030, it will generate 170 million new roles, leading to a net gain of 78 million jobs.

The report emphasizes the growing demand for skills in AI, big data, cybersecurity, and technology literacy, with clerical and secretarial jobs being most at risk due to automation. Roles in manual labor, like farming and truck driving, along with knowledge-based positions such as software developers, are seen as relatively safe from AI's impact. The report also highlights the importance of traditional skills like analytical thinking, leadership, and adaptability.

As companies prepare for these changes, 77% plan to implement retraining programs, and 70% intend to hire AI specialists, underscoring the need for upskilling in the AI field.



[Chinese AI company DeepSeek challenges U.S. dominance with free, new cutting-edge model](#)

Chinese AI company, DeepSeek, has drawn significant attention in the AI community by releasing an advanced language model that rivals those of major U.S. companies like OpenAI.

DeepSeek's model, V3, boasts 671 billion parameters and was developed at a fraction of the cost of OpenAI's GPT-4. In addition, DeepSeek has released another model, R-1, which excels at reasoning tasks such as coding and solving complex problems, offering it for free, while OpenAI charges users for similar models.

DeepSeek's rapid success has raised concerns in the U.S. about maintaining AI leadership, with many startups and industry leaders reassessing their strategies in light of the Chinese company's achievements. Trump warns industries to stay focused on AI innovation and security experts caution that using DeepSeek's models without proper evaluation could pose risks related to national security and free speech.



AI models predict bed shortages in Indian mental health hospitals

A recent study from India explores how machine learning can predict and manage bed occupancy at the country's second-largest mental health hospital.

With rising mental health issues, predicting bed usage is key to ensuring hospitals are adequately prepared and able to provide proper care.

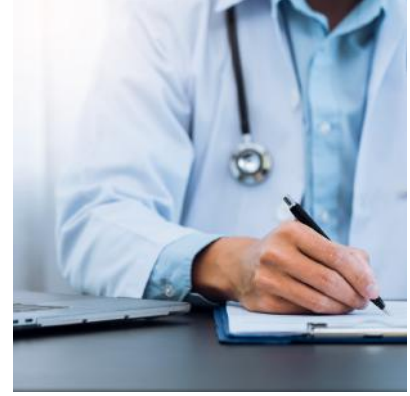
By analyzing data from 2008 to 2024, the study aims to help administrators plan better, optimize resources, and ultimately improve the quality of mental health care in India.



The long-lasting health benefits of vacations for employees

Vacations offer long-lasting health benefits, with significant improvements in employee wellbeing when workers fully disengage from their jobs. A meta-analysis of 32 studies across nine countries found that physical activity and psychological detachment from work both contribute to increased wellbeing.

Those who completely disconnect experience the greatest benefits. Longer vacations offer more lasting effects, though the return to work can be challenging. Researchers recommend planning time to decompress before and after the trip and keeping active while away.



NHS England to scale back targets in an aim to reduce wait lists

NHS England plans to halve the number of national targets to focus on delivering faster treatment for hundreds of thousands of patients, including planned surgeries and urgent care.

New guidance aims to treat 450,000 more patients within 18 weeks and speed up cancer diagnoses, with around 100,000 more people referred for urgent cancer checks getting a diagnosis or the all-clear within 4 weeks.

Mental health care will also be a priority, with local systems expected to meet the Mental Health Investment Standard in 2025/26.

NHS England will give local leaders more flexibility to prioritize spending. Dementia care is among the targets cut for 2025/26.

AI and Mental Health

Strengthening mental health support at Ithaca College: Our partnership with Wysa



Michelle Goode, Director of Health Promotion, Ithaca College

At Ithaca College, we understand that navigating college life can be challenging. From managing stress during exams to coping with loneliness and balancing academic, social, and personal responsibilities, mental health is a cornerstone of student wellbeing. We always want to provide different ways for students to access help. Last year we undertook a project to investigate what was available and are now providing Wysa amongst our support toolkit, a self-care tool that customizes to the individual using it.

Why Wysa? Meeting the needs of our students

The decision to collaborate with Wysa stemmed from our commitment to finding evidence-based solutions that meet the evolving mental health needs of our students. After the discontinuation of our previous app, Sanvello, in 2024, our team conducted extensive research and piloted multiple options. Our students and staff in the pilot program all selected Wysa as their top choice.

Features that really stood out to our pilot participants were the aesthetic of the app, the use of calming colors and the imagery -

especially the Wysa penguin! It was important to the Center for Health Promotion Team that we were able to find a self-care tool that used evidence based approaches like CBT and DBT. Additionally, we wanted to ensure that the resource selected met privacy and data security standards, which Wysa does. It's secure, private and all conversations are anonymous, with no data being shared or sold which aligns perfectly with Ithaca's values and our commitment to confidentiality.

We were able to personalize certain aspects of the app, like the SOS safety feature. For example, for students in crisis or needing more support, we were able to guide them to Ithaca's counselling team. What we loved about Wysa was its versatility and the sense of comfort it brings. Whether it's guiding students through mindfulness exercises before a group presentation or offering a listening ear during tough moments when adjusting to life on campus, Wysa provides tools that are effective, engaging and available at any time of day or night. What's more is that through our partnership with Wysa, this support extends to our staff at Ithaca College, and their dependents also, so it's fostering a real community of wellness.

Student ambassadors: Building a peer-led mental health movement

At Ithaca College, we are excited to have Wysa student brand ambassadors, who are student volunteers who have found the Wysa resource so beneficial that they have signed up to help promote Wysa to their peers and the campus community. These students share information about Wysa with their peers across campus and on their social media accounts.

As a staff member I can and do share resources such as Wysa with our campus community, but having this resource shared directly by students is much more impactful and helps create a culture that normalizes talking about mental health and self-care.

This peer-driven approach helps foster a supportive and informed campus culture around mental health.

Jacob, a Wysa Ambassador at Ithaca College shares his motivation for the role:

"I became a Wysa brand ambassador because I wanted to make a difference on campus, and I truly believe in Wysa's ability to support students' mental wellbeing. As a brand ambassador, I promote Wysa at my school by driving engagement through social media, tabling events, and outreach efforts to teach students about the app."

"College can be overwhelming at times, and not everyone is comfortable with reaching out for support. That's where Wysa comes in. It's private, non-judgmental, and always available for students. This makes it incredibly useful for them to manage their stress levels, check-in with themselves, and build healthy coping habits, all on their own terms."



Wysa Brand Ambassadors showcasing Wysa at the Ithaca College student involvement fair.

Results and early insights

While it's still early in our partnership with Wysa, the initial response from students has been positive. Engagement is enthusiastic and many students have shared how the app has already become a staple in their self-care routines. We look forward to tracking its impact as more students and staff integrate Wysa into their daily lives.

Looking ahead

At Ithaca College, we believe in supporting individuals' holistic wellness where students and employees can thrive. With Wysa available as a self-care tool and resource for our campus community we hope this tool can help individuals build and strengthen coping skills and center self-care and wellness into their lives, both at college and beyond.

[Find out more](#) about Ithaca's commitment to mental health and spiritual wellness, and explore the tools and resources available to staff and students.



Recipe for a Healthy Relationship: 10 Essential Ingredients for Lasting Love



By [Asia Schmidt](#), Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist, Certified Clinical Trauma Specialist, Certified Behavioral Change Specialist and Certified Relationship Coach.

Throughout my career as a coach and counselor, I've had the privilege of working with many couples seeking guidance on their relationships. And over the years, I've come to realize that relationships are a lot like recipes. Certain key ingredients are essential to creating a healthy, lasting bond.

While some ingredients won't destroy the relationship if they are present, (like a dash of difference in opinion), others are non-negotiable when it comes to ensuring the long-term success of a relationship.

It's important to remember that relationship deal-breakers vary from person to person, so what may seem insignificant to one person may be a complete turn-off to another. It's highly advised that you take the time to reflect on the ingredients that while not the tastiest, won't destroy the relationship recipe for you.

That being said, let's explore some of the most important ingredients for a healthy relationship together today.

Key ingredients for a healthy relationship:

Plenty of mutual respect: Both must partners value each other's opinions, boundaries, and individuality. They respect each other's differences and ensure that they treat each other with kindness and understanding. Mutual respect is cultivated by appreciating the differences each partner brings to the relationship and the boundaries both parties feel are important to them.

A heaping cup of trust: Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship. Trust is built when both partners feel secure and confident in each other's words and actions, and there is no room for dishonesty or betrayal. Trust is cultivated when both parties learn how to be vulnerable with each other when sharing their fears, hopes, concerns and other issues that are important to them.

A whole lot of effective communication: Healthy relationships involve open and honest communication. It's essential that both partners feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment or retaliation. Effective communication is cultivated when both parties actively and empathetically listen to each other.

A generous serving of support: Support is vital to building a healthy relationship. Whether it's encouraging one another's goals, offering comfort during tough times, or being there for daily needs, support is necessary, and communicates to your partner that what matters to you, matters to them too. Support is cultivated by taking an interest in each other's lives and encouraging them during difficult times. As the saying goes, "your best ability is your availability."

A splash of independence: A healthy relationship consists of both parties having space to maintain their own identity, pursue personal interests, and spend time apart. Independence is cultivated when both parties are encouraged to engage in activities that are unique to them. Healthy relationships encourage personal growth and self-care.

A touch of compromise: Individuality is important as we all bring differences that make us unique into the relationship. However, there are times when partners need to be willing to make compromises to find solutions that work for the betterment of the relationship. Compromise is cultivated not by sacrificing core values or needs, but rather by working together to reach mutual agreements. Compromise is rooted in both parties focusing on the bigger picture which is the health of the relationship.

A hearty spoonful of affection and intimacy: You can't have a healthy relationship without affection and intimacy. Emotional and physical affection help deepen the connection between partners. Affection and intimacy are cultivated when expressions of love and appreciation contribute to intimacy which results in creating a more positive bond.

Whisking through conflict resolution: Unfortunately, disagreements are inevitable, but in a healthy relationship, partners handle conflict with respect and a desire to find resolution. Conflict resolution is cultivated by avoiding name-calling, yelling, or harmful behaviors and instead focusing on solving the problem together.

A cup of shared goals and values: While partners may have differences, a healthy relationship also consists of having similar core values, life goals, and priorities that help align a shared vision for the future. Shared values are cultivated when both parties understand the importance of building a future together.

Mix in fun and enjoyment: Fun and enjoyment is one of the most important keys to a healthy relationship. Laughter, shared activities, and time spent enjoying each other's company are some of the core foundations that make a relationship work. Fun and enjoyment are cultivated when both partners understand the importance of not taking themselves too seriously and making time for activities that promote joy.

There should be at least five positive interactions for every negative one.

The research on the ratio of positive to negative moments in relationships is like finding the perfect balance between sweet and salty in a recipe. According to psychologist [John Gottman](#), there should be at least five positive interactions for every negative one to keep things flavorful in a successful marriage.

Think of it as adding a generous amount of sweetness to your relationship, like affectionate gestures, shared laughter, and supportive conversations - these moments help keep things light, uplifting, and enjoyable; it's a real treat to spend time with one another this way.

On the other hand, a pinch of salty moments like criticism, defensiveness, or contempt can leave the relationship feeling bitter and weighed down, making it harder to stay connected. Too many salty moments, like arguments without resolution can overpower the sweetness, leading to emotional burnout in the relationship.

If you find yourself with a mix that's too salty, it's time to adjust the recipe. Perhaps revisiting your communication styles or adding more opportunities for connection can help to sweeten things up.

To keep your relationship both sweet and satisfying, ensure those positive moments far outweigh the negative. A small act of kindness can go a long way in ensuring your bond stays strong and lasting.

Sweet Vs Salty: A relationship flavour chart

Sweet

- A kiss on the forehead
- Complimenting each other
- Listening attentively without interrupting
- Offering a sincere apology when needed
- Sharing a spontaneous hug or embrace
- Encouraging each other's goals and dreams
- Showing appreciation for the little things (like making coffee)
- Laughing together over a shared joke
- Offering a kind word of reassurance during tough times
- Acts of thoughtfulness, like remembering important dates or surprises

Salty

- Snapping at each other in frustration
- Ignoring each other's feelings or needs
- Criticizing or belittling each other
- Withholding affection or attention
- Stonewalling or refusing to communicate
- Blaming each other for problems instead of finding solutions
- Being dismissive of each other's concerns
- Bringing up past mistakes during arguments
- Avoiding important conversations or issues
- Showing contempt through sarcasm or eye-rolling

Good recipes take time. Some of the best meals I've ever tasted were meals prepared with care, attention to detail and healthy balance of a variety of flavors, not fast food. As you work towards identifying the essential ingredients you deem necessary for your relationship, make sure you remember the importance of patience and communicating what you need and why. For those looking to cook up a wonderful relationship, here's a further (non-cook book) reading list I'd recommend: **1)** Discover your love language through Dr. Gary Chapman's *The 5 Love Languages*, **2)** Understand attachment styles with *Attached* by Amir Levine and Rachel Heller, and **3)** Build stronger bonds with *Mindful Relationship Habits*, 25 practices for couples to enhance intimacy, nurture closeness, and grow deeper connections by S.J. Scott and Barrie Davenport.



"I have value, people care about me, and things will get better with time."

Breaking the cycle of negative thinking with Wysa's digital support.

How Wysa supported mental health in Singapore during the pandemic.

Read the full research paper published in [Frontiers](#).

In a time of uncertainty and stress, we wanted to understand how our digital mental health tool, Wysa, could help people cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with the Ministry of Health's mindline.sg initiative, we offered a brief online intervention through their website, and a more in-depth version of support via our app. The results were not only encouraging but also showed how digital tools can provide essential mental health support during tough times.

A promising start

Over 69,000 people engaged with the brief intervention on mindline.sg, and more than 4,000 went on to download the Wysa app. What we found was that those who started with the brief intervention on the website stayed longer and engaged more deeply with the app afterward. In fact, nearly 92% of users who tried cognitive restructuring on the app were successful in reframing their negative thoughts, particularly those related to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. This tells us something important: short, AI-powered interventions can provide valuable mental health support, especially when the world is facing a crisis like COVID-19.

The numbers tell a story

69,055 unique users took part in 96,856 sessions on the mindline.sg website. 83% of users rated it positively. The most popular interventions were Energy/Mood Check-ins and Cognitive Restructuring .

18.5% of users went on to download the app after using the mindfulness interventions.

69,000 unique users

96,856 sessions

83% positive feedback

4,103 users from the mindline.sg cohort engaged with the app. The average Wysa app user had 10+ sessions, with 61 days of retention. Top interventions included Mood Check-ins and Cognitive Restructuring.

What stood out was that those who completed the brief intervention before using the app stayed more engaged and had longer retention compared to those who used the app right away.

The negative thoughts we helped tackle

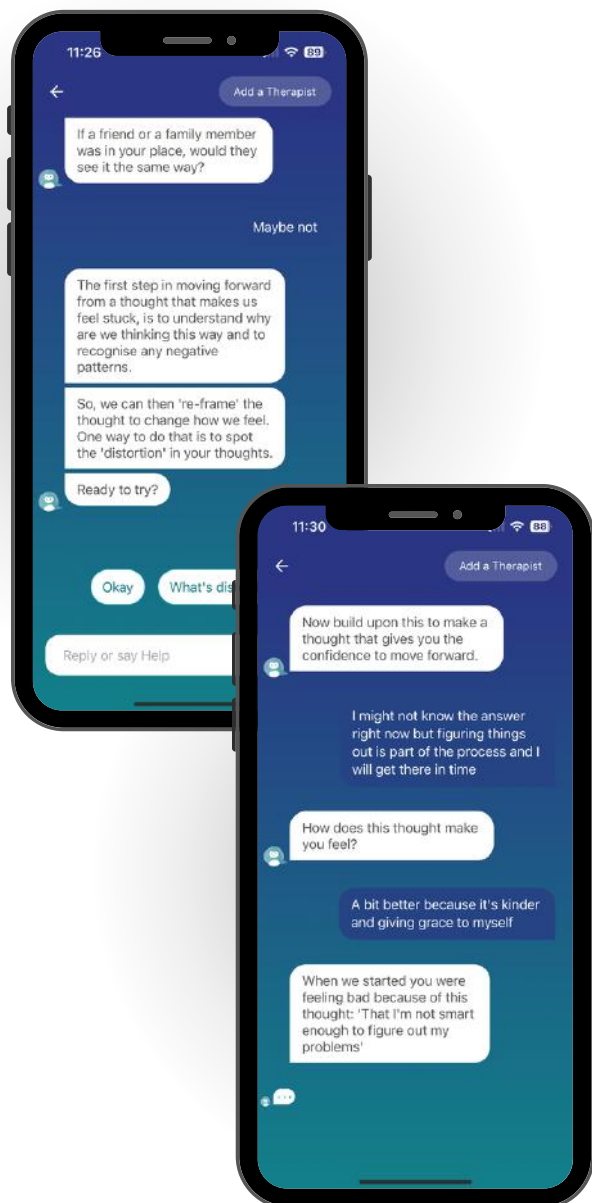
A key part of our study involved identifying the different types of negative thoughts users were grappling with during the pandemic. By anonymously analyzing the app's conversations, we discovered three main categories of negative thoughts often associated with depression. Utilizing Beck's cognitive triad theory as a framework, we examined the thoughts most prominent in this population, which captured some themes often found in collectivistic cultures, reflecting a want to live up to expectations, and the pressures of performance and relationships.

These interconnected negative thought patterns contribute to and reinforce mental health difficulties, particularly depression and anxiety. Wysa's cognitive restructuring intervention was particularly effective in helping users challenge and reframe these automatic negative thoughts, transforming their outlook on themselves, their circumstances, and their future. This shift in thinking, from rigid and pervasive negativity to more balanced and realistic perspectives, is a cornerstone of the therapeutic process and an encouraging sign of the app's potential to improve mental health outcomes.



Creating positive change with cognitive restructuring

The app's cognitive restructuring tool was particularly effective. About 91.6% of users who attempted it had success, with 66.6% achieving breakthroughs on their first try. What's interesting is the shift in how users viewed their problems - many transformed internal, stable, and global thoughts into more positive, specific, and flexible ones. For example, users shifted from thinking, "I feel like my friends don't like me" to "I can work on becoming a better friend." Through this process, users were able to break down the rigidity of their negative thoughts and find new, healthier perspectives.



91%

**who attempted
cognitive restructuring
had success**

66%

**had breakthroughs
on their first try**

What we learned

Our study revealed several key findings. The first is that brief interventions, like the one on mindline.sg, can significantly boost engagement with longer, more in-depth tools, like our app. We also learned that digital mental health tools can be particularly helpful in times of stress, such as during a pandemic. Even if the negative thoughts weren't directly related to COVID-19, the environment of uncertainty exacerbated them.

Additionally, cultural factors played a role in shaping how people thought. Many of the negative thoughts users experienced reflected values around duty and achievement, common in collectivist societies. This underlined the importance of considering cultural context in mental health interventions.

Finally, our research highlighted the importance of cognitive restructuring in addressing negative thought patterns. By helping users shift their thinking, we saw positive mental health improvements.

What's next?

We're excited about the future. This research gives us a better understanding of how digital tools can be optimized to help people overcome negative thinking, and we look forward to continuing our work in this area. Our findings reinforce the potential of brief, AI-led interventions to support mental health. By combining these short interventions with more in-depth, long-term tools, we can create mental health solutions that work for people during the most challenging times.



Upholding employee wellbeing priorities in a shifting political and cultural climate



*By **Sarah Baldry***

*Chief Marketing Officer, **Wysa***

*As published in **make a difference.***

As we witness the unfolding of a new political landscape with Donald Trump's re-election, the implications for global employee wellbeing strategies are profound and multifaceted. The world's HR leaders are right now grappling to attentively navigate this rapidly changing environment, where the rollback of gender-identity rights, alongside the erosion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and flexible working rights, threatens the foundational principles of empathy, support, and belonging that are so essential for a healthy workplace.

The recent executive orders aimed at dismantling protections for marginalised communities not only signify a concerning regression in civil rights but also instigate a larger discourse on the moral and ethical responsibilities of organisations in safeguarding employee wellbeing. As industry leaders, the onus is on us to rethink our strategies, elevate supportive workplace cultures, and foster resilience amidst uncertainty.

The dangers of regressive policies on employee morale

The revocation of DEI programmes explicitly aims to reinforce a binary view of gender and reduce the representation and support systems for LGBTQIA+ employees. This paradigm shift is not merely administrative; it has tangible effects on the emotional and mental wellbeing of those affected. When organisations signal that certain identities are less valued, they inadvertently create an environment where any employee may feel unsafe, unsupported, and marginalised.

Some prominent companies, such as Meta Platforms Inc. and McDonald's, have already begun to roll back their DEI initiatives. Meta, for instance, announced it would eliminate specific diversity programmes tied to hiring and training due to changes in the "legal and policy landscape." Meanwhile, McDonald's and Starbucks have discontinued rewarding diversity goals, emphasising a shift that reflects the prevailing political discourse. Walmart has also made headlines by reversing its DEI policies by no longer considering race and gender when awarding supplier contracts. A move that drew sharp criticism from investors who expressed their discontent in a letter to CEO Doug McMillon.

With an internal pushback against DEI and the pressures from conservative groups, these companies illustrate the broader trend of retreating from inclusive practices in the face of evolving political currents.

These actions cause us to reflect: What does it mean for thousands of employees who have fought for recognition and representation?

Employee morale, engagement, and retention are intrinsically linked to inclusive practices. When these practices are dismantled, we risk not only losing diverse talent but also eroding the trust and loyalty of our existing workforce.

Reassessing diversity in a changing climate

We must all recognise that any retreat from diversity and equity is rarely an isolated issue; it is tied to broader cultural shifts and narratives. The U.S. Supreme Court's June 2023 decision to end affirmative action in college admissions further simplifies the argument against DEI by framing it as a divisive and inefficient approach. With companies like American Airlines abandoning their DEI hiring practices due to legal challenges from conservative advocacy groups, we see a direct correlation between politics and corporate behaviours.

The notion that DEI initiatives are "inefficient" fails to consider how diversity enhances organisational performance, fosters innovation, and attracts a wider talent pool. Thriving workplaces are built upon diversity—richness in thought, experience, and background fuels creativity and progress. HR leaders should think carefully about what the evidence from the likes of McKinsey, BCG, and the Harvard Business Review suggests before introducing regressive policies that threaten advances.

Embracing resilience: The role of HR in uncertain times

Facing a potentially hostile landscape due to political shifts, HR leaders must embrace resilience as a cornerstone of organisational culture. We must not shy away from difficult conversations but rather create forums for discussing the intersectionality of race, gender, and mental health within the workplace.

Adopting an adaptive approach means developing flexibility in policies, reassessing training programs, and ensuring robust support systems are in place. By building resilience into our frameworks, we can empower employees to navigate adversity while still feeling valued and engaged.

Education and awareness campaigns about the importance of employee mental health, along with ongoing training for leadership on diversity and inclusion, can instill a shared vision among employees and management.

Encouraging staff to participate in mental health awareness programs, celebrating diversity through organised events, and recognising contributions of employees from various backgrounds can build respect and camaraderie within teams. By fostering a sense of community and belonging, organisations can help mitigate feelings of isolation or alienation that are often amplified in turbulent political climates.

Should this strategy fail, framing wellbeing initiatives as essential components of employee engagement can transform the conversation. Rather than relegating mental health to a mere HR checkbox, these initiatives should be woven into the fabric of the organisation, supporting not only individual resilience but overall productivity. When employees perceive these resources as vital enablers of their success, they are more likely to engage—not only in support-seeking but also in their roles as collaborative team members.

Creating safe spaces for mental health

As stigma deepens, employees may feel compelled to suppress their personal needs. The mental health crisis will only worsen if workplaces fail to provide safe spaces. HR leaders would be well placed to focus on options that prioritise anonymity and privacy.

The mental health crisis will only worsen if workplaces fail to provide safe spaces.

As companies recalibrate their DEI policies and face societal pressures, employees may be even more hesitant to engage in discussions around mental health and inclusion. Creating anonymous reporting systems or mental health support channels can significantly reduce the barriers to seeking help, allowing individuals to voice concerns and access resources freely.

When organisations actively dismantle the stigma associated with mental health, they lay the groundwork for healthier, more engaged, and productive workplaces.



A wellbeing strategy under a shifting political climate

As we forge ahead into the complexities of this new era, it is clear that the responsibility for fostering a supportive, inclusive, and mentally healthy workplace lies heavily on the shoulders of HR leaders. This is not just a moment of defense; it is an opportunity to advocate for clear, transformative change.

- **Stand firm on the narrative:** Actively counter the rhetoric surrounding DEI and mental health. Promote the narrative that diversity is a strength—one that enhances innovation, creativity, and resilience within the organisation.
- **Enhance support systems:** Invest in anonymous support channels and mental health resources that resonate with employees. Utilize technology that prioritises discretion while delivering essential services.
- **Promote open dialogue:** Foster a culture that encourages conversation around mental health and diversity. Create safe spaces for employees to share their experiences and discuss challenges without the fear of stigma or repercussion.
- **Measure impact:** Collect data on employee satisfaction, mental health, and wellbeing regularly. Use this data to refine policies and practices continually, demonstrating that the organization is responsive to employee needs.
- **Commit to continuous learning:** Stay informed and adaptable in the face of changing political realities. Engage with communities advocating for better rights and support, ensuring that organizational practices align with societal progress.

While the challenges ahead may seem daunting, they present a unique opportunity for HR leaders to champion inclusive practices and mental wellbeing as fundamental to organizational success. Together, we can cultivate cultures that empower individuals, embrace diversity, and prioritize mental health, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.

Ultimately, our commitment to these principles can make a significant difference—not just for our employees, but for the society we all share. Let us rise to this occasion and reaffirm our dedication to creating workplaces where everyone feels valued and supported.





What's your conflict style?

Understand how you navigate disagreements and learn strategies for healthier communication.

Being the valentines issue, let's work on improving our relationships. Conflict is a natural part of any relationship, but how we handle it can strengthen or strain our connections. This article, inspired by the widely recognized [Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument \(TKI\)](#), will help you identify your conflict style and provide practical tips to foster healthier interactions. Before diving into the quiz, let's explore the framework behind these styles.

What is the TKI?

The TKI framework was developed by psychologists Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann in the 1970s. It helps people handle conflict and can be applied to office environments to manage team dynamics on collaborative projects, in friendships to manage disputes, or in romantic relationships to better understand and navigate disagreements.

Take the quiz

Reflect on these five questions to discover your primary conflict style.

Q1. When a disagreement arises with your partner, what's your first reaction?

- a) Avoid talking about it further and hope it blows over.
- b) Insist on proving your point.
- c) Agree to whatever they want to keep the peace.
- d) Suggest a solution that works for both of you.
- e) Discuss the issue openly and brainstorm solutions together.

Q2. After working all week, you and your partner can now spend some quality time together, however you disagree on weekend plans. What do you do?

- a) Avoid deciding and let time pass. See how you feel tomorrow.
- b) Insist on your choice because you've been thinking about it all week.
- c) Go along with what they want to do to avoid an argument.
- d) Propose a mix of both ideas, even if it's not perfect for either.
- e) Discuss both ideas thoroughly to find the best option.

Q3. How do you feel after a disagreement with your partner?

- a) Relieved it's over, even if unresolved.
- b) Frustrated if I didn't get my way.
- c) Drained, because I always give in.
- d) Satisfied that we both made some effort to resolve it.
- e) Positive, because we worked through it together.

Q4. Your partner comments that you spend too much time on your phone. How do you respond?

- a) Ignore the comment and change the subject.
- b) Defend yourself by saying they're being unfair.
- c) Apologize and promise to use your phone less, even if you don't agree.
- d) Suggest you both set boundaries for phone use.
- e) Ask why they feel that way and discuss how to balance your time better.

Q5. You and your partner are running late and start blaming each other. What do you do?

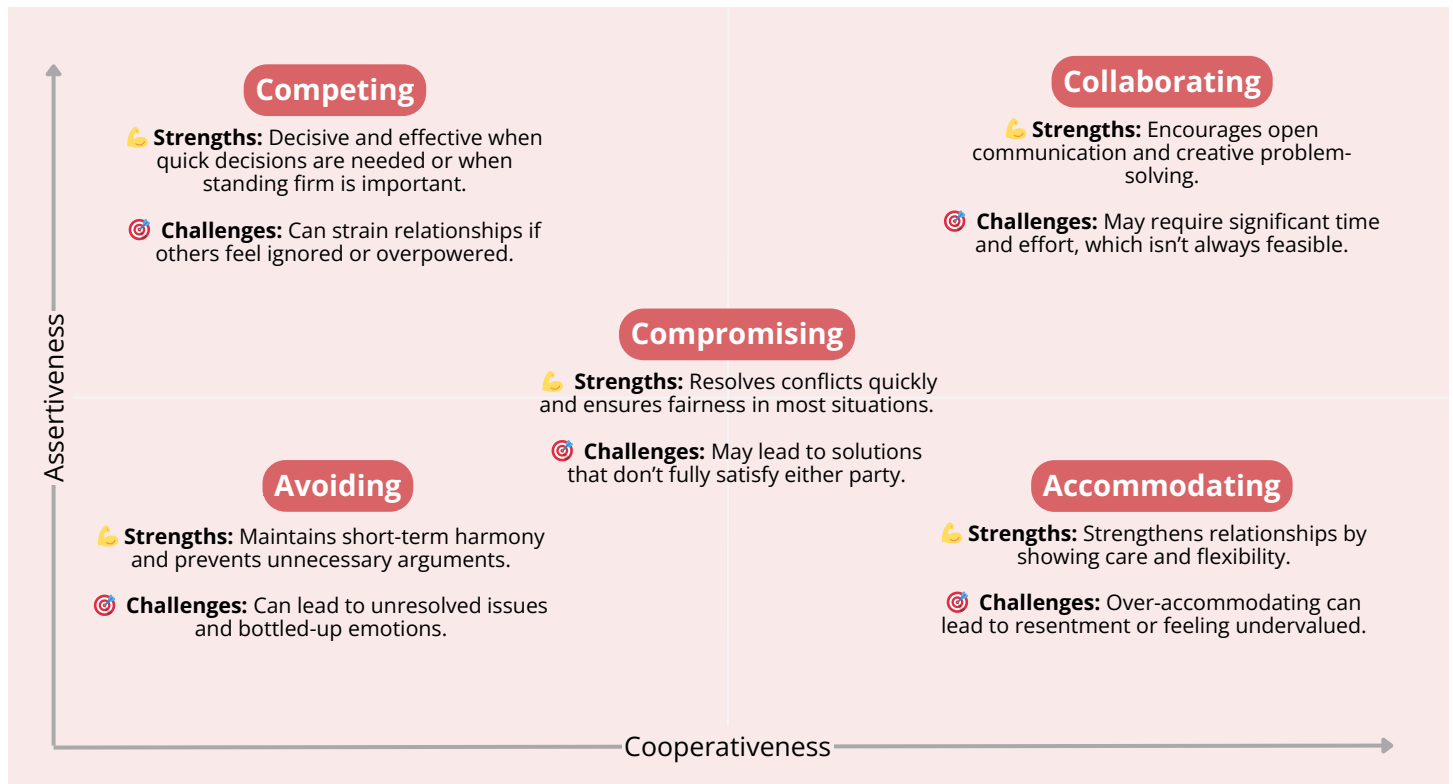
- a) Stop talking and wait for the tension to fade.
- b) Argue that it's entirely their fault.
- c) Apologize immediately to defuse the situation.
- d) Suggest you both take partial responsibility and move on.
- e) Talk about what happened calmly to prevent it in the future.

Your conflict style

Choose which option you selected most often to the questions above to discover your primary conflict style.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A Mostly A's: Avoiding | C Mostly C's: Accommodating | E Mostly E's: Collaborating |
| B Mostly B's: Competing | D Mostly D's: Compromising | |

Working with your conflict style



'Avoiding'

Summary: You prefer to sidestep conflict, hoping it resolves itself, often to protect your peace or avoid discomfort.

Tips for Growth: Practice addressing small conflicts to build confidence. Remind yourself that expressing concerns can strengthen relationships. Use "I" statements (e.g., "I feel..." or "I need...") to express your perspective calmly.

'Competing'

Summary: You focus on asserting your needs and viewpoints, often aiming to "win" the argument.

Tips for Growth: Practice active listening to understand others' perspectives. Recognize when collaboration or compromise might yield better long-term results. Balance confidence with empathy to maintain strong relationships.

'Accommodating'

Summary: You prioritize others' needs over your own, often to maintain harmony.

Tips for Growth: Reflect on your own needs and practice asserting them when necessary. Use boundaries to ensure your kindness doesn't come at your expense. Communicate openly to avoid feeling overlooked or taken for granted.

'Compromising'

Summary: You seek middle ground where both parties make concessions.

Tips for Growth: Aim for collaboration when stakes are high or solutions need to be more thoughtful. Assess when compromise is sufficient and when a deeper resolution is needed. Ensure your core needs aren't sacrificed in the process.

'Collaborating'

Summary: You aim for a win-win solution, seeking solutions that satisfy all parties, fostering long-term trust.

Tips for Growth: Set realistic expectations when collaboration isn't possible. Recognize when a compromise or quick solution is more practical.

Share this quiz with your partner to help them discover their own conflict style! Identifying your conflict styles will give you both a better understanding of how to work together during disagreements. By being open to growth and compromise, you can strengthen your connection and create a healthier, more harmonious relationship. Here's to a wiser approach to conflict!

Q. How do I support my struggling teen?

“My 13-year-old has been really down lately. They seem tired all the time and have lost interest in activities they used to enjoy. I don’t know if this is just a normal teenage phase or something more serious. How do I know when to seek professional help?”

A.

Dear Parent,

It’s so hard to see your child feeling down, isn’t it? You might be wondering: Is this just a teenage phase, or could it be something more? Please know, you’re not alone in feeling this way. So many parents share this worry, especially during the teen years when so much is changing for them, and for you.

Adolescence is a rollercoaster. Hormones, school pressures, friendships, and figuring out who they are can all create emotional ups and downs. It’s completely normal for teens to have off days or even weeks. But when the “off” starts to feel like their new normal - when their sadness, tiredness, or withdrawal lingers - it’s worth paying closer attention.

What’s Normal vs. When to Worry

Teenagers are naturally moody at times, and they might pull back from family or snap over small things. That’s part of growing up. But when you start noticing bigger changes that stick around for a while, it might signal that they’re struggling.

Here are some signs to watch for:

- 1. Persistent Sadness or Irritability:** Are they feeling low, crying often, or lashing out more than usual—and has it lasted for weeks?
- 2. Loss of Interest:** Have they stopped doing things they used to love, like hanging out with friends or pursuing hobbies?

3. Changes in Sleep and Energy: Are they sleeping all the time, struggling to fall asleep, or always tired no matter what?

4. Appetite Changes: Have you noticed a big shift in their eating habits or weight?

5. Social Withdrawal: Are they isolating themselves from people they care about?

6. Hopelessness or Negative Self-Talk: Have they been saying things like, “What’s the point?” or “I’m no good at anything”?

7. Risky Behaviors or Self-Harm: Are they engaging in unsafe activities, turning to substances, or harming themselves in any way?

These signs don’t mean something is “wrong” with your child, but they are clues that they might need extra support.



How to Start the Conversation

If you're worried, trust your instincts and talk to them. You don't have to have all the answers—just being there makes a difference. Try something like: "I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. You've been really tired and not doing the things you usually enjoy. I'm here if you want to talk." They may not open up right away, and that's okay. Let them know you're there, ready to listen, without judgment.

When to Reach Out for Help

If these changes persist for more than a couple of weeks or seem to be getting worse, it's time to seek professional help. A counselor or psychologist can help figure out what's going on and offer the right support. If your child talks about self-harm or feeling hopeless, don't wait—reach out to a mental health professional or call a hotline for guidance.

What You Can Do in the Meantime

- **Create Stability:** A regular schedule with time for sleep, movement, and relaxation can make a big difference.
- **Show Them It's Okay to Feel:** Let them know it's normal to feel sad or overwhelmed sometimes. You can even share times when you've felt the same and what helped you.
- **Be Self-Compassionate:** Supporting a struggling teen can be emotionally exhausting, and it's easy to feel like you're not doing enough. Remember, you're human too, and it's okay to have tough days. Take care of yourself so you can keep showing up for them.

It's never easy to see your child struggle, but by noticing these changes and showing you care, you're already doing something so important. You know your child better than anyone, and if you feel something isn't right, trust yourself. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not failure.

You're not alone, and you don't have to go through this alone either. There are people who can help, both you and your teen.

With warmth,

Smriti



**Smriti Joshi, Chief of Clinical Services
& Ops, Wysa**

Ask Smriti



Every issue, we ask Smriti Joshi one of your burning questions, and she offers expert opinion, rooted in science and decades of experience.

If you have something related to mental health technology, employee wellbeing, artificial intelligence or population health, please get in touch on press@wysa.io and we will **Ask Smriti**.

About Smriti

Smriti Joshi, Chief of Clinical Services and Operations at Wysa is a licensed clinical psychologist with over 21 years of experience in India's mental health sector. She is an Advanced Telemental health professional and has authored papers and book chapters, contributing significantly to tele-counselling guidelines through the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists. Smriti leads mental health tech discussions on the Therapists in Tech platform and is a part of the National Mental Health Council for WICCI. She has appeared in several media outlets, including a TEDx talk and CNBC-TV18. Smriti holds an M.Phil in Clinical Psychology from the University of Delhi and specializes in treating depression, anxiety, insomnia, anger, and loneliness.



NOSTRUM NON EST AURUM V

Real life user story

Navigating panic and anxiety with Wysa: John's journey through NHS Talking Therapy

For many people facing mental health struggles, the wait for therapy can be agonizing. John, a bar manager from northwest Kent, England, knows this firsthand. As part of his ongoing battle with **agoraphobia** and **panic attacks**, he's been through various treatments over the years. Now, during a particularly tough stretch, he's found some relief through Wysa's AI-driven mental health support app offered as part of his **NHS Talking Therapy**.

"I've had talking therapy over the summer, and it's helped a bit," John says. "But if I'm really honest, I haven't found a lot of help out there. I've been pushed from pillar to post. I've had this condition for a long time, and it's come and gone over the years. When I self-referred again, I spoke to someone on the phone, and they sent me a link to the Wysa app."

John was initially unsure how useful a digital tool would be for managing his mental health but was willing to give it a try. "I thought, why not? I'll give it a go and see if it helps," he says.

Living with panic attacks at work

John's daily reality involves managing panic attacks while working in a high-pressure environment. "I've run pubs all my life. Right now, I'm working in a private members' bar," he explains. "But some days, it's hell. I just got back from work, and it was four or five hours of utter hell. The panic attacks get really bad. You're on your own, no family around you, stuck at work, thinking you're going to drop down dead."

When these moments hit, John finds himself needing immediate support, and this is where Wysa helps. "It's pretty acute, and it wears me down. It has actually worn me down these last couple of weeks," he admits. "But Wysa is helpful. You've got to get your head into the space where you're talking to a person instead of a computer, it can be strange. But I do use it."

Wysa's breathing exercises as a lifeline

John frequently turns to **Wysa's breathing exercises** when he feels overwhelmed. "The breathing stuff is really helpful," he says. "When I'm at work and feel a panic attack coming on, the first thing I do is open the app and go straight to the breathing exercises. They really help calm me down. It's quick and easy, which is what you need in those moments."

The ease of accessing these tools has been key for John, especially given the nature of his job. "When you're in the middle of a busy shift, you can't stop to write things down or call someone. Wysa is there when I need it. I just type in 'anxious' or 'relief,' and it helps just by typing stuff out."

Daily check-ins for mental health management

John has also found the **daily check-in feature** useful in keeping himself engaged with his mental health. "I've set a check-in time to make sure I use it regularly. The app asks you to check in twice a day - once in the morning and once in the evening. It reminds me to focus on how I'm feeling," he says. "I've been trying to take it seriously and check in every day, which helps keep me on track."

"Sometimes I finish work at one or two in the morning, and then I miss my morning check-in. But I make sure to do it when I can."

A lifeline while waiting for therapy

Like many people waiting for NHS therapy sessions, John faces long delays between appointments. "I've been waiting four or five weeks now for my next talking therapy session," he says. "And it could take up to two months before I actually get it."

In the meantime, Wysa has provided John with a crucial source of support. "At least I've got something," he explains. "It's not the same as talking to someone face-to-face, but it's a point of contact when you're feeling really low, and that's important."

John sees Wysa as a valuable tool in managing his mental health during this waiting period. "Having something to turn to while you're waiting for therapy is a big deal," he says.

Recommending Wysa to others

When asked whether he would recommend Wysa to others dealing with anxiety or depression, John is clear: "Yeah, I would," he says. "It's not perfect, but it's a good support system. If someone told me they were struggling with their anxiety or depression, I'd definitely recommend Wysa to them in the meantime."

For John, Wysa has become an essential part of his mental health toolkit. "I like it. It's there when you need it. It's not like you're totally on your own," he says. "Even though you're talking to an app, it's a point of reference. It's quick, and it helps, which is all you can ask for sometimes."

Looking forward

As John continues to navigate his mental health challenges, Wysa offers him an element of control. "I like that it's always there for me when I need it," he reflects. "It's not the same as talking to a therapist, but it's better than nothing. And when you're stuck in the middle of a panic attack, having something to rely on - even if it's an app - makes a huge difference."

For now, Wysa offers John a small, yet meaningful, lifeline in moments of acute anxiety - helping him get through the long days at work and the challenging weeks ahead as he waits for further therapy sessions. And for people like John, who face ongoing mental health battles, that's no small thing.



Wysa partners with April Health to deliver collaborative care to the USA

Together, we're making high-quality behavioral health support more accessible by integrating Wysa's AI-powered mental health tools with April Health's expertise in primary care.

aprilhealth.com



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