



Wise Up

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

World Mental Health Day: Celebrating Wysa's 8th birthday.

Shaping the future of safe AI in mental health.

U.S. insurer MassMutual joins the Wysa family.

Back to school and struggling: Addressing the youth mental health crisis.

Special guest feature: The parents are not alright.

Real life user story:

"My therapist introduced me to Wysa and it's helped me out of my shell."

Ask Smriti:

My wellbeing budget is about to be cut! How can I save it?

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Welcome

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another issue of Wise Up! As always, we're here to bring you the latest updates, insights, and real-life stories in AI and mental health from around the world. Kick off with our news round-up before celebrating Wysa's 8th birthday with us as we reflect on our journey and look ahead to the future with Ramakant Vempati, President and Co-founder of Wysa.

In our special guest article, Michelle Yu, Co-Founder and CEO of My Josie, explores the challenges faced by working parents today and advocates for greater workplace support.

In response to the youth mental health crisis, Emma Taylor, UK CAMHS Clinical Lead for Wysa shares insights into the landscape of digital technologies to empower educators.



We invite you to help us shape the future of safe AI in mental health as we announce Wysa's new multilingual AI safety initiative.

As for partnerships, we're proud to share that MassMutual is now the first U.S. insurer to offer policyowners free access to AI-guided mental health support through Wysa, as part of their commitment to mental health and wellbeing.

Feeling burnt out? Take our burnout quiz to assess your own burnout levels and get tips from Dr. Lila Varsani on how to care for your mental health this season.

We also feature independent journalist Nicholas Fearn, who shares his experience testing Wysa over the course of a month, reflecting on its impact in times of distress.

Budget cuts at your organization? Chief Psychologist, Smriti Joshi offers advice on maximizing your wellbeing budget when resources are tight.

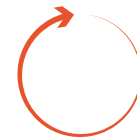
Lastly, we bring you an inspiring story from 45-year-old Andrei, who found Wysa to be a great support after his therapist recommended it to him.

Thank you for being here for another issue and happy reading!

Megan

Megan Kirk, Marketing Manager, Wysa

Wise news round-up



Will AI replace job interviews, or bring in-person interviews back?

The rapid rise of AI in recruitment could spell the end of traditional job interviews, with tools like ChatGPT helping employers screen applications and job seekers to refine their resumes.

Curtin University's Professor, Patrick Dunlop envisions AI agents potentially handling both sides of the hiring process, though concerns over AI misuse, like cheating in online assessments may push companies back to in-person interviews, something Deloitte recently did for its graduate program.

While AI can reduce bias and streamline recruitment, past failures like Amazon's AI tool that favored men highlight the risks. Dunlop suggests a middle ground where AI supports candidates who struggle with interviews while helping employers make fairer assessments. However, an "arms race" is underway, with both job seekers and companies constantly adapting to use technology to their advantage.



New commission aims to combat mental health impacts of environmental change

The Earth, Brain, Health Commission is a new initiative addressing the mental health impacts of environmental changes. Formed by a diverse group of experts, the commission aims to explore how global trends like climate change, urbanization, and pollution affect mental health.

Mental disorders, which account for nearly 30% of the global non-communicable disease burden, are exacerbated by environmental factors contributing up to 40% of the risk for some conditions.

By utilizing advanced data science and AI, the commission aims to produce actionable solutions and policy recommendations to mitigate the mental health impacts of environmental stressors. Its efforts will include research, workshops, and outreach to drive global health improvements and resilience.



The impact of children's mental health on working parents

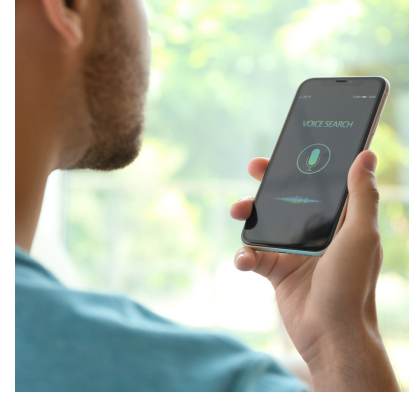
Bupa's latest research reveals that almost two-fifths (39%) of parents, around 7.6 million people, worry about their child's mental health at least once a week. This ongoing concern leads one in three parents to lose sleep and one in five to feel mentally or physically exhausted, affecting their work performance. The study highlights the growing impact of young people's mental health on caregivers' productivity and well-being, making it a business issue that companies cannot ignore.



AI tool cuts unexpected deaths in hospital by 26%, Canadian study finds

A Canadian study from St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto found that an AI tool, Chartwatch, reduced unexpected patient deaths by 26% since its introduction in 2020. The system monitors vital signs and medical data, alerting healthcare staff to potential issues before they become critical, enabling earlier interventions.

Developed by Unity Health Toronto, Chartwatch has shown significant success in reducing mortality in patients compared to those not using the system. While further validation is needed, the study highlights the potential of AI to improve patient outcomes and transform healthcare.



Using voice AI to detect mental health conditions early

Can AI detect early signs of depression from your speech? It turns out, it can!

New advancements in voice AI technology are making it possible to detect early signs of depression through speech analysis. Utilizing sophisticated algorithms, this technology examines speech patterns to identify indicators of mental health conditions, such as subtle changes in tone, pitch, and pace. By analyzing these voice biomarkers, AI offers crucial early detection and diagnosis, which is vital for managing mental health issues effectively. Other key benefits include self-detection, triage capabilities and clinical support.

This innovative approach represents a significant step forward in the proactive management of mental health, promising better outcomes through early intervention and personalized care.

AI and Mental Health

World Mental Health Day

Celebrating Wysa's 8th birthday. Reflecting on the past and looking to the future.

Founders thoughts.



Founder's story

After meeting at college, husband and wife team Jo Aggarwal and Ramakant Vempati embarked on corporate careers that are a world away from founding the planet's most popular mental health app. What began with high profile stints at blue-chip giants including Tata Group, Goldman Sachs and the Pearson Group, eventually led the duo to Wysa - a global leader in AI-driven mental health support.

Stress and burnout had taken its toll on Jo who started to suffer from depression. Meanwhile, the couple were caring for Ramakant's elderly father who was bipolar. This first hand experience of the impact of mental health sparked something. Jo and Ramakant developed a machine learning platform that would analyse existing data points available on mobile phones, such as calling patterns, screen time and sleep time, to put together a three-dimensional view of someone's mental health.

A clinical trial followed, the results of which proved that by analysing data patterns the app could identify people who were at risk of depression with up to 85% accuracy. The trial also showed that the app was a powerful platform to interact with people who were suffering with their mental health.

The trial app posed a simple question: "How are you feeling today?" With users encouraged to respond using an appropriate emoji. It had an instant impact. The data showed that the app wasn't just identifying those at risk from depression, but actively helping to improve their mood.

The Wysa app was subsequently created based on this evidence, using evidence-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) exercises alongside a library of interactive self-help content and an emotionally intelligent AI-chatbot designed to take engagement to the next level.

This World Mental Health Day, Ramakant Vempati reflects on the history of Wysa, including the moment the pin dropped for him as a founder, and looks ahead to the future highlighting the new and upcoming projects and services Wysa is launching.



***By Ramakant Vempati,
President and co-founder of Wysa***

"World Mental Health Day this year is Wysa's 8th birthday. The first version of Wysa went live on the Apple and Google play stores in October 2016, and we made it open access in January 2017.

Five months after we launched, we got an email from a 13-year-old girl who said that Wysa was the only thing that was helping her after she attempted to take her own life. She couldn't speak to anybody else. When that happened, I think that was when the penny dropped, personally for me, as a founder. We've since received more than 430 personal messages from people who claim the app has saved their lives. On a larger scale, we've been able to help more than six million people across 90+ countries.

We got an email from a 13-year-old girl who said that Wysa was the only thing that was helping her after she attempted to take her own life.

At a time when the external environment has constantly been changing, and many others have not survived, this is a big achievement. This wouldn't have happened without all of my colleagues who have given their time and talent to Wysa: those who are here now, and those who have gone before.

As the Wysa team has grown, we have had to grow as well - managing through Covid, dealing with grief and loss, going completely remote, learning to work with, trust and help each other across geographies and timezones.

In this growth, while trying to do something unique, our challenges feel unique as well. How do we build a culture that is resilient in the face of all the change around us - in tech, in market adoption, in the funding environment? How can we focus, but also adapt? How do we keep performing as an organisation, but in a sustainable way? How can we maintain trust? Sometimes, we have succeeded - and at other times, we're learning how to do better.

As our ninth year begins, the future feels so exciting - and we have so much to do. Six million people helped can grow to sixty million. Momentum is increasing, and a lot of our product investments are starting to bear fruit. Pressure and change, our old friends, are still around; but it feels different now. What we have achieved has created a base for what is to follow.

This past year Wysa has introduced Generative AI in a safe way to Wysa's chatbot. Users can now "opt in" to this feature which enables deeper conversation and understanding for a better user experience. Find the [playbook](#) we wrote on the safe and responsible use of Generative AI for the purpose of mental health, published by Wysa founder and CEO, Jo Aggarwall.

As our ninth year begins, the future feels so exciting - and we have so much to do. What we have achieved has created a base for what is to follow.

We've also focused on making an impact in rural areas of India, where stigma, lack of awareness and infrastructure challenges limit access to mental health services. We're developing Wysa in Hindi and Marathi, and exploring SMS and WhatsApp based services to bring support to people without internet, and in their local languages.

Speaking of languages, this leads us nicely into our big announcement this month. We're collaborating with [Microsoft Research Lab](#) to enhance the safety and usability of Large

Language Models (LLMs) in the context of mental health. In our collaboration, we aim to establish a reliable framework for validating LLMs in highly sensitive areas such as suicidality, intent to harm, and abuse, with a special focus on multilingual performance.

Finally, this year also sees us launch Wysa Copilot, a clinically safe hybrid digital and human therapy platform. The platform enables secure, real-time and asynchronous messaging with the ability to prescribe digital self-help tools and review patient progress. It is currently used by our own Wysa coaches and UK NHS Talking Therapy services and will be made available to practices consisting of 10 or more clinicians.

I want to thank you for your support along this journey so far. I hope I speak for all of us at Wysa when I say -Jo and I can't wait to see what's next."

You can follow [Wysa on LinkedIn](#) to stay up-to-date with all the latest news and developments.





The parents are not alright



By Michelle Yu,
Co-founder and CEO, Josie

On Aug 28, 2024, The U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy put out an Advisory titled "Parents Under Pressure." The nearly 30 page document details the dire state of mental health and well-being among parents. He points out that 41% of parents say most days they are so stressed they cannot function.

In my work at Josie, I specifically see how this manifests among parents who have big careers and are rising stars at their respective organizations. I've seen amazing leaders opting-out of the workforce, seeing it as the only path to survival. But I've also seen many of them stay - and continue to advance in their careers. Over time, I've come to learn that those who continue on have one thing in common: a work environment that honors their identity as parents and as strong leaders.

41% of parents say most days they are so stressed they cannot function.

So, how can employers create that environment - one in which their working parent employees can continue to thrive?

There are three specific initiatives that I've seen HR and people leaders adopt to address this. And the good news? None of these will break the bank. They are small yet culture-shifting actions that any organization can start to do, right away:

Equip Your Managers

So often we hear from our clients that the decision to stay or jump ship has almost everything to do with the relationship they have with their direct people manager.

Here's the bottom line: you can offer months of paid parental leave, the best healthcare and wellness benefits, and the best amenities - but if your employee feels poorly supported it's likely they won't be around for very long.

Most managers want to support their working parent employees. They just don't have the right tools and training to do so effectively.

The default assumption is that the manager just doesn't have the empathy or willingness to help. But this couldn't be further from the truth. Most managers want to support their working parent employees. They just don't have the right tools and training to do so effectively.

At Josie, we've seen employers implement a number of creative ways to support managers:

- One is to host a group training session specifically on managing team members with caregiving responsibilities. This has become increasingly popular in light of remote work and increasing parenting pressures cited in Dr. Murthy's advisory.
- The second is specific to parental leave. One of our clients at Josie developed a Manager Playbook for parental leave. The comprehensive document outlines manager expectations across the leave period, communication tips, biases to watch for, and a list of available benefits and programs they can proactively share with their employees.
- Other organizations offer individual, one-on-one coaching for managers who may need an external sounding board to work through a tricky scenario.

All of these activities are relatively low-lift, yet can have a profound impact on employee experience.

Strategic Employee Resource Groups

Recently, I asked a group of working parents to complete the sentence, "Being a working parent is ____." The first response was "juggling five burning chainsaws, while standing on one leg." While funny, there is certainly some truth to it. Dr. Murthy's report highlights a critical point about working parenthood: Time spent on paid work and time spent on primary child care has increased significantly for both mothers and fathers since the 1980's.

That means parents are spending more hours than ever before on nurturing their children and their careers. It's amazing to see, but there is no playbook to navigate any of it.

Parents are spending more hours than ever before on nurturing their children and their careers.

Employee Resource Groups (ERG's) are an incredible resource for parents at work. They create safe spaces for working parents to exchange ideas, feel less alone in the struggle, and find supportive resources as they seek balance. Over the past few years, I've personally seen a rise in ERGs specifically dedicated to parents and caregivers. When run well, these groups become an integral part of fostering a strong and inclusive company culture, which in turn directly impacts business results. In other words, they become a core part of driving company strategy.

Employee Resource Groups (ERG's) are an incredible resource for parents at work. They create safe spaces for working parents.

To maximize impact, ERGs need senior leadership sponsorship and budgets. The relatively small investment can result in outsized returns if managed appropriately. In this article, I highlight successful practices I've seen at organizations such as The Royal Bank of Canada, Numerator, and LinkedIn.

Just-in-time Benefits Awareness

In 2018, when I was returning to work after my first baby, I was immediately asked to start traveling weekly to Nashville for a new client engagement. As a new mom, I was nervous yet excited that I would have an opportunity to get back on the road and feel like my former self, if even just for a few days at a time. But my biggest concern was pumping and carrying breastmilk through airports, hotels, and client meeting rooms. I managed, but it was stressful and absolutely impacted my productivity. Six months later, after I had stopped pumping, I ran into another new mom in the office. She casually mentioned how grateful she was that our organization had Milk Stork, a breastmilk shipping service for new mothers who traveled. I was shocked.

So often we hear that employers have amazing benefits for their parent employees - from Employee Assistance Programs, to child care benefits, to content subscriptions - so many are available yet completely underutilized. And while Open Enrollment is a fantastic time to communicate new programs, it's usually not when employees need to access them.

So often we hear that employers have amazing benefits for their parent employees - from Employee Assistance Programs, to child care benefits, to content subscriptions - so many are available yet completely underutilized.

Just-in-time benefits awareness is crucial for working parents. Part of this is ensuring managers are aware of what's available (see above), and making sure they communicate them with employees if they see a need. Another is simply ensuring that processes are in place to get benefits in front of employees at the right time, in the right ways. For parental leave in particular, what processes do you already have in place today that you can tack-on to? For example, who is your leave of absence provider? Can they proactively share a list of available programs with your employee as soon as they initiate their paperwork? How about the return to work? Do you have a re-onboarding process that includes appropriate communication of support programs?

People leaders: the parents are not alright, and they are some of your best team members. Give them the opportunity to continue to burn bright - not burn out. A few, simple actions can drive a tremendous return on investment.

Josie partners with businesses and families with tailored coaching and content for parental leave and beyond.

To learn more about Josie and how they can support your organization, please contact Michelle Yu at michelle@myjosie.com.



You're invited to help shape the future of safe AI in mental health!

Wysa launches multilingual AI safety initiative to evaluate large language models for mental health support

As the global leader in AI-driven mental health support, this October, Wysa launches the **Safety Assessment for LLMs in Mental Health (SAFE-LMH)** in a major step toward transforming mental health care worldwide.

Unveiled on World Mental Health Day, this pioneering initiative will create a first-of-its-kind platform to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of multilingual Large Language Models (LLMs) in mental health conversations

ensuring these AI systems can safely navigate some of the most sensitive issues, particularly in non-English languages.

Wysa invites research partners from across the globe to collaborate on this vital mission. SAFE-LMH is set to redefine mental health care by making AI-driven support more scalable, accessible, and culturally attuned to millions of individuals, especially in underserved regions.



"Our goal with the Safety Assessment for LLMs in Mental Health is clear: to ensure that the world's rapidly advancing AI tools can deliver safe, empathetic, and culturally relevant mental health support, no matter the language."

"Since 2016, we've been at the forefront of clinical safety in AI for mental health, and with generative AI becoming a common tool for emotional support, there's an urgent need to set new standards."

"This initiative is an open call for developers, researchers, and mental health professionals to come together and create a safer, more inclusive future for AI-driven care."

Jo Aggarwal, CEO of Wysa.

Wysa will develop and open-source a robust dataset of mental health-related test cases, featuring 500-800 questions translated into 20 languages - including Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, and 10 Indic languages like Marathi, Kannada, and Tamil.

These test cases will enable AI developers to rigorously evaluate their models' ability to provide safe, accurate, and compassionate support across a wide range of cultural contexts.

The **SAFE-LMH** platform will rigorously assess LLMs on two crucial factors:

1. LLM's refusal to engage with harmful or triggering topics, such as suicidal intent or self-harm.
2. The quality of LLM responses—whether they are preventive, empathetic, or potentially harmful—when they do engage.

This initiative tackles the critical gap in AI model evaluation for non-English languages, where linguistic and cultural nuances can greatly affect an AI's capacity to handle complex mental health topics. SAFE-LMH will set a new global benchmark for safe and effective AI-driven mental health support.

Wysa encourages AI developers, mental health researchers, and industry leaders to join **SAFE-LMH** and help shape the future of AI in mental health. A comprehensive report will be published following the evaluations, offering key insights to advance mental health safety in AI.

Ready to join this transformative initiative to help to shape the future of safe AI in mental health care?

Visit: www.wysa.com/safe-lmh





Navigating Mental Health in a Modern World: One Man's Personal Experience with Wysa

Wysa launched eight years ago with a simple mission: to provide accessible, compassionate mental health support to people when they need it most. What began as an idea has since grown into a globally recognized AI-driven mental health platform that helps millions worldwide.

Last week, journalist [Nicholas Fearn](#) published an independent review of Wysa in a raw and deeply personal piece in The Metro titled, "I Spent a Month with an AI Therapist – This is What Happened." This review couldn't have come at a more significant time.

For a company dedicated to improving mental health support through AI, an independent review like this is more than a test of technology - it's a test of trust.

When Nicholas asked to independently review Wysa for The Metro, I felt a mix of excitement and anxiety. This review was different. Nicholas wasn't reviewing Wysa as a theoretical product test - he was using it in

real life, during deeply vulnerable moments. And we had no direct contact with him throughout the process. We couldn't intervene if something went wrong or if he misunderstood a feature. He used the app exactly as any user would - unprompted, unfiltered, and unaided.

In his article, Nicholas shared his struggles with mental health, including lifelong battles with anxiety, OCD, and even suicidal thoughts. It was eye-opening to see how Wysa interacted with him during some of these dark moments. At one point, he admits, "Crying my eyes out, I told Wysa I didn't want to be alive anymore. Its response was utterly heartwarming: 'Nic, you are worth life. You are loved, cherished, and cared for, even though you may not feel that way right now.'"

Reading this was deeply moving because it encapsulates everything we strive for - creating an AI that doesn't just respond to users, but offers genuine empathy and comfort during moments when they might not

have anyone else to turn to.

In fact, over time, 438 people have reached out to us with similar stories of how Wysa has been there for them in their darkest hours - moments where they felt their lives were on the line. Wysa is not intended as a suicide prevention tool, yet time and time again, we hear that it has helped avert the worst in moments of crisis.

Real-Life Context: The Ultimate Test

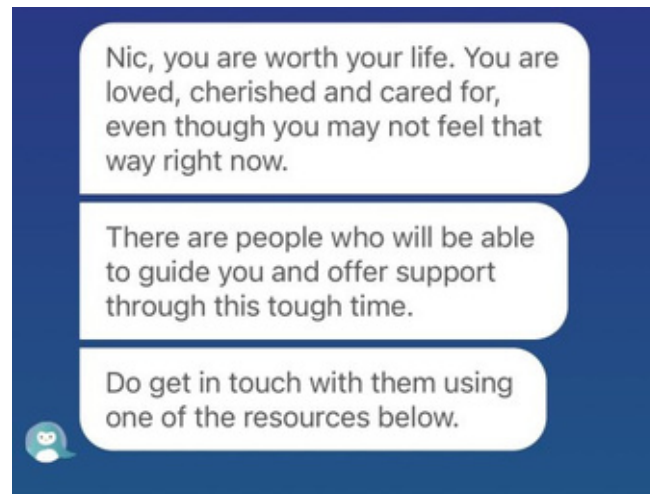
One of the most nerve-wracking aspects of this review was that Nicholas wasn't just "testing" Wysa in a controlled environment. He was using it during real, raw moments of emotional distress. As he wrote, "After admitting I never seem to sleep at a regular time due to my anxiety, Wysa suggested a thought-reframing exercise... and while the connection cut out mid-conversation, it was clear to me that I was overthinking." This highlights both Wysa's strengths and its areas for improvement. Nicholas wasn't just engaging in a short test or quick demo - he was relying on Wysa during difficult, anxious nights, when sleep evaded him and his thoughts spiraled.

As a team, we couldn't predict how Wysa would perform in these unpredictable, highly personal circumstances. We couldn't fix anything mid-review, clarify features, or provide support. The independence of this review was crucial because it pushed Wysa to operate exactly as it would for any user. It was the real world testing our product in ways no laboratory or clinical trial can replicate.

In Nicholas' own words, "I never thought I'd be telling my insecurities to a robot, but Wysa was incredibly empathetic, asking thoughtful questions and offering exercises that helped me manage." His experience reinforces our core belief that AI, when carefully designed and tested, can play a critical role in mental health care.

The Importance of Independent Validation

The significance of Nicholas' review is also a reminder of the importance of independent validation. As a company, we spend months refining features, testing safety protocols, and seeking feedback, but there's something different about handing your product over to someone who has complete freedom to use it as they need.



In his review, Nicholas talks about his battle with social anxiety, writing, "While I'm okay seeing family and friends, the thought of encountering neighbours frightens me. The advice Wysa gave - just a smile or hello - was surprisingly simple and helpful. It showed me that I didn't need to engage in long conversations, just small steps." This resonates because it shows that even the simplest AI suggestions can have a profound impact when given at the right moment.

A Step Forward

As I look back on Nicholas' review and the countless hours our team has poured into Wysa, I feel both proud and motivated. The stakes are high when dealing with people's mental health, and independent reviews like Nicholas' are the real test of whether we're meeting that challenge.

When Nicholas concluded his review by saying, "The bot's words were a comfort to me," it was a reminder of why we do what we do. As we move forward, we aim to ensure that people from all corners of the world, no matter what language they speak, can find that same comfort, support, and safety. More to come soon, with open-source discoveries.

Please take a moment to read Nicholas' full review in [The Metro](#).



***Written by Sarah Baldry,
Chief Marketing Officer, Wysa
As seen on [LinkedIn](#).***

MassMutual joins the Wysa family

MassMutual becomes first U.S. insurer to offer policy owners free access to AI-Guided mental health support

Free access to Wysa Assure available to eligible MassMutual policy owners.

Company also expands availability of other health and wellness program tools and offerings to help more policyowners better understand and protect their health.

In October, MassMutual announced it is the first insurer in the U.S. to offer eligible policy owners free access to Wysa Assure, an AI-powered conversational mental health app created by Wysa and Swiss Re.

This offering is the latest addition to MassMutual's Health and Wellness Program, which provides policy owners with knowledge about their health, empowers them to seek out appropriate interventions and motivates healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

Data shows that more than one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness. Wysa Assure makes every day mental health support accessible through its clinically validated, AI-guided chat support, available 24/7. In addition to a free subscription, eligible policy owners get access to more than 150 evidence-based tools to address day-to-day challenges like anxiety, motivation, stress, sleep, and productivity. Another notable feature includes a well-being score to help users stay focused on their mental and emotional health.





MassMutual's Health and Wellness Program has expanded significantly over the past year. Most recently, MassMutual broadened its partnership with GRAIL, building on its initial pilot where eligible policyowners were provided with access to GRAIL's Galleri® multi-cancer early detection test. The first phase of the GRAIL program generated tremendous early interest, with more than 2,200 policyowners ordering the test in 2023. Following the program's recent expansion, more than 10,000 policyowners are expected to participate in the program by the end of this year. To date, many individuals have received information from the test that has allowed them to better understand and protect their health, and 96% of those participating have indicated a positive overall experience with their testing.

Earlier this year, MassMutual also announced its expanded partnership with Genomics plc and expanded the availability of the MassMutual Wellness-Enhanced Lifestyle & Longevity (WELL) Rider offering to certain current term life policyowners in addition to new term life policyowners.

The MassMutual Health and Wellness Program employs a test-and-learn approach, with the development of the platform guided by policyowner interest and other learnings. Participation in MassMutual Health and Wellness Program initiatives is voluntary for policyowners. Results do not impact policyowners' current policies or premiums. MassMutual only receives high-level, anonymized data from the Genomics, GRAIL and Wysa offerings and leverages policyowner information strictly to facilitate providing benefits associated with using the LivingWELL by MassMutual app. Anonymized, aggregate data allows the company to better understand policyowners' health and behaviors as well as their interest in these types of offerings. Eligibility is based on factors including age, geography, and type of individual MassMutual policy.

"At MassMutual, we recognize the interconnectedness of mental and physical health and how both can influence our policyowners' longevity. That's why we are expanding our Health and Wellness Program to include mental health support, complementing our current offerings that focus on identifying potential health risks and rewarding healthy behaviors. By improving access to mental health support and continuing to invest in our policyowners' well-being, we hope to help them better understand their overall health and take steps toward a happier, healthier, and longer life."

- Sears Merritt, head of Enterprise Technology and Experience at MassMutual.



Back to school and struggling: Empowering our educators to address the youth mental health crisis



Emma Taylor,

UK CAMHS Clinical Lead, Wysa

Emma Taylor qualified as a mental health nurse in 2012 and has worked in child and adolescent mental health throughout that time. Emma has won several awards for her work in nursing and digital innovation. She is an experienced clinical innovator in digital services and the CAMHS Clinical Lead for Wysa. Emma is a clinical specialist in parenting intervention in conduct disorders, ADHD and difficult-to-manage behaviours. After seeing the support digital interventions like Wysa could offer adults and teenagers, Emma co-founded Embers the Dragon, an animated platform bringing children's wellbeing to life. Funded by NIHR and Innovate UK the program supports 3-8 year olds and their parents to learn more about managing difficult emotions.

In most cases teachers and educators go into the job because they want to help the next generation grow and develop. They're passionate about learning, about seeing potential and transforming it into something amazing, about making a difference.

But the youth mental health crisis is making that hard. Absence levels are at an all-time high, with one in five persistently absent over the last academic year. And a key cause of this is mental health.

Figures from our [research](#) at Wysa show that the children and young people's UK mental health crisis is worse than estimated. Over 1 in 3 13-17-year-olds surveyed indicate symptoms of depression or anxiety that warrant investigation – and 82% self-report a range of mental health issues such as anxiety (49% – rising to 63% of females), trouble sleeping (21%), dislike of image (26%), fear of socialising (29%) and other concerns. Half are worried about their parents' money, showing influence of news agenda and the cost of living crisis on teenagers' mental health.

[Official figures](#) point to 1 in 6, but this data suggests something much more widespread. In fact, it suggests that 1.3 million 13-17-year-olds have symptoms of anxiety and depression that could warrant further investigation.

But most worryingly, young people aren't getting the help that they need. More than half (55%) who scored 3 or more on GAD2 and PHQ2 screening questionnaires for anxiety and depression haven't spoken to a relevant professional about it.

More than half of students (55%) who scored 3 or more on GAD2 and PHQ2 screening questionnaires for anxiety and depression haven't spoken to a relevant professional about it.

Teachers want to help but don't have the resources or support to do so. A [survey](#) conducted by the National Education Union

found that 92% of teachers in the UK say their schools lack sufficient access to child and adolescent mental health services. Out of over 18,000 union members surveyed, 66% of teachers and 57% of learning support assistants said their educational institutions do not provide adequate CAMHS access for students. Additionally, a quarter of teachers and a third of support staff report that their schools have no access to CAMHS support and that lack of support is cited as a major barrier to supporting students' mental health.

92% of teachers say their schools lack sufficient access to child and adolescent mental health services.

Another [study](#) reveals that only a quarter of primary schools in England will be able to provide essential school-based mental health support by the end of 2024. Despite the high levels of young people estimated to have a mental health disorder, and how crucial specialist support is in addressing early symptoms and alleviating pressure on stretched NHS services, there are worrying gaps. Almost three-quarters (73.4%) of primary schools and over half (53.5%) of secondary schools are predicted to lack access to these mental health support teams by the end of 2024 – a huge gap in provision that could have long-term consequence.

78% of UK school staff reportedly experienced mental health symptoms due to their work in the past academic year. 59% of staff had considered leaving the profession.

And their mental health is also suffering. According to the 2022 [Teacher Wellbeing Index](#) – a survey carried out by the charity Education Support – 78% of UK school staff reportedly experienced mental health symptoms due to their work in the past academic year and 59% of staff had considered leaving the profession.

So everyone is struggling. And it's affecting not only health, but education levels, and long-term potential in employment, relationships,

and even levels of crime.

Digital could be part of the answer. Existing CAMHS services in schools are sporadic, sparse, and not frequent enough. There's only so much that can be done in a weekly appointment, and the stigma a young person feels around firstly telling a teacher they need support, and then getting up and leaving class to go to a session can be a huge barrier. Their mental health challenges don't just strike at an allotted time – they can flare up anywhere, anyhow, and need addressing in the moment.

30% are going to TikTok for mental health support compared to 20% reaching out to teachers.

Our research found that of the 2000 students asked 80% would choose to use a clinically validated app with self-help resources over going to a teacher. They're turning to their phones already – 30% are going to TikTok for mental health support compared to 20% reaching out to teachers. If young people are on their phones already and clearly seeking resources that listen to them when they need it, why don't we provide them?



If young people are on their phones already and clearly seeking resources that listen to them when they need it, why don't we provide them?

By acting in the moment and providing always-on support, mental health symptoms can be managed before they deteriorate, which results in poorer wellbeing, increased absence, reduced academic attainment, and a bigger strain on services. Too often teachers make a referral, only for the wait to be many weeks or even months before treatment starts. Digital tools can speed up the process of triage, so that the vital support begins earlier, addressing issues before they escalate. Digital is fast – as mental health waits for no one.

Apps aren't just for students. We need to support teachers. Staff in CAMHS services at Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT) and St Andrew's Healthcare (STAH) have been using AI mental health app to support their wellbeing and mental health. The project, in collaboration with NHSEI Midlands, NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit, saw Wysa provided to 350 staff members at the hospitals.

The project aimed to assess the impact of digital wellbeing support for staff in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) wards after this was identified as one of five core areas in children and young person provisions where additional support may improve outcomes for staff and young people. The response was overwhelmingly positive. If it works on a busy ward, it's likely to work in a busy school.

Digital makes it easier for young people to access the vital mental health support they need, when they need it. Young people shouldn't have to wait until they are very unwell to receive treatment or support. So whether they need one-to-one therapeutic support, wellbeing resources, immediate and ongoing support and information, or on-demand exercises to help their mental health – digital tools will be with them every step of the way. If we want to raise mentally health young people, we need to be giving them the resources they need, when they need it.



Burnout alert! Are you losing your drive at work?



*With tips from **Dr. Lila Varsani***

Consultant Psychologist, Clinical Product Director, Wysa

What is burnout?

Burnout is more than just being tired; it's a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion often caused by prolonged work and life stress. It can sneak up on you, leaving you feeling detached, drained, and like a zombie at work, going through the motions without any real energy, motivation or passion. Identifying burnout early can help you make changes before it takes over your life.

This quiz will help you determine how close you are to burnout by reflecting on your feelings and habits over the past two weeks. Record your answers to the following seven questions to find out where you stand, discover recommendations, and create your action plan.

Q1. How often do you feel like you're just going through the motions at work?

- A. Occasionally it gets this way
- B. On a regular basis
- C. I'm checked out every day

Q2. When you finish work after a typical day, how do you feel?

- A. Ready to enjoy my free time doing something I like.
- B. I often feel worn out but can usually recover by resting.
- C. I'm constantly drained and struggle to recharge.

Q3. How well do you sleep at night?

- A. I sleep well and wake up feeling rested most mornings.
- B. I wake up during the night or have trouble falling asleep a few times a week.
- C. I struggle to sleep well most nights.

Q4. When I wake up in the morning I am...

- A. Ready to start the day.
- B. Tired but usually feel better after I get going.
- C. Exhausted and struggling to make it out of bed.

Q5. What's your usual reaction to minor illnesses like colds or headaches?

- A. I hardly ever catch colds or deal with headaches, and when I do I recover quickly.
- B. I get colds or headaches when I'm particularly stressed but can manage.
- C. I'm always dealing with something like a cold or headache, and it takes a long time to recover.

Q6. How do you feel you're managing life's responsibilities lately?

- A. In control. I can balance my responsibilities well, and I rarely feel overwhelmed.
- B. I'm managing. It's a lot, but I'm able to cope with most of the demands.
- C. I feel totally overwhelmed and struggle to keep up with everything.

Q7. Lately, how have you been feeling about yourself and your overall outlook on life?

- A. I generally feel confident, capable, and satisfied with my accomplishments.
- B. I have moments of self-doubt or negativity but can still find some enjoyment and motivation.
- C. I often feel helpless, detached, or overwhelmed, with little sense of achievement or interest in things I once enjoyed.

OUTCOMES

Pre-burnout: If you answered mostly A, you have the potential to experience burnout, but you're currently managing well.

Dr Lila Varsani says well done, keep up the good work! It sounds like you're keeping burnout at bay. It's always good to be aware that burnout can creep up on us, so know the signs and make an effort to maintain a good work-life balance. Let's look at the ways you can continue to prevent burnout from taking over. These may include setting realistic expectations, for example, managing your workload by breaking down large projects into manageable tasks, setting achievable SMART goals and avoiding overcommitting to too many tasks, projects or short deadlines. Prioritizing self care is important; adequate sleep and regular exercise go a long way in helping us to maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Though you might feel tempted to simply "get it all done", working in isolation can increase stress levels. When it comes to preventing burnout, seeking a supportive work environment that encourages teamwork and regular communication allows you to open up and share some of the load.

Early burnout: If you answered mostly B, you're already showing signs of burnout and feeling the effects - consider taking steps to rejuvenate.

You're experiencing some signs of burnout, but the good thing is you've noticed them and can begin to take action, says Dr Lila Varsani. You might be experiencing more irritability, reduced performance, or a lack of motivation at work and in daily life. You may benefit from seeking support from trusted others such as close friends or family, trusted colleagues, or a mental health professional. When at work, make sure to step away from your desk every hour or so, stretch, get a drink or simply breathe deeply. Outside of work, try to ensure that you spend time looking after yourself by engaging in a variety of activities that you enjoy and which make you feel good about yourself. A healthy work life balance in the longer term will help you to prevent burnout at work from worsening.

Total burnout: If you answered mostly C, you're deep in burnout - some immediate changes are needed to restore your wellbeing.

Firstly, it's important to acknowledge the burnout. Acknowledging is the first step to addressing it, says Dr Lila Varsani. Be honest with yourself and accept that you will need to make some changes to the way you are currently working. Try to prioritize seeking help, this could include addressing your burnout with your manager, or arranging some professional talking therapies support. It's more important than ever that you begin to prioritize tasks and workload. You can't do it all. Multitasking can increase stress so it may be more helpful to focus on one task with limited distractions from emails or notifications during focus time. If you don't already have boundaries in place try to set some, this might be as simple as setting a strict end to your workday when you will be unreachable via email or call for work-related issues. You could take some leave from work if you can so that you can fully disconnect, using this break to recharge by focusing on activities that help you relax and rejuvenate, whether that's spending quality time with loved ones, traveling, or engaging in your hobbies.



Now that you've determined your current level of burnout, it's time to take action. Consider creating a plan to manage stress and prioritize self-care. Implementing strategies such as setting boundaries, seeking support, and making time for relaxation can help you improve your wellbeing. Even if you're not currently in a state of burnout, taking proactive steps now to protect your future health and wellbeing can enhance your overall productivity and happiness.

This quiz is created purely as a fun and engaging tool to help you reflect on your work stress levels. It is intended solely for entertainment purposes and is not a diagnostic tool. If you are experiencing significant burnout, it's always a good idea to talk to your manager, GP, and/or a mental health professional. For further help and support, explore resources on [burnout symptoms and signs](#) or consider connecting with a therapist via the Wysa app for 1-1 support.

Ask Smriti

Every issue, we ask Wysa's Lead Psychologist 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 and population health, please get in touch on press@wysa.io and we will **Ask Smriti**.



Smriti Joshi, Chief Psychologist at Wysa and a licensed clinical psychologist, has 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.



Professional Advice

Q. Wellbeing budget cuts

My wellbeing budget is about to be cut because the uptake of the benefits we offer isn't enough. What can I do to keep it?

Dear Reader,

A. Thank you for sharing your question. It's tough when budget cuts signal that wellbeing isn't seen as a priority or that it's not having the impact you hoped for. I can imagine it feels like a dismissal of the efforts you've put in. But this situation doesn't necessarily mean there's no need for wellbeing - it may just mean there's a gap between what's being offered and what employees actually need or are engaging with. Here's what you can do to turn that around:

1. Understand what employees truly need

Sometimes low uptake isn't about the benefits themselves, but about how well they're aligned with your employees' specific needs. Instead of assuming wellbeing isn't important, start a conversation - whether through surveys, small group discussions, or informal check-ins. You might find that people need different kinds of support - whether it's more mental health resources, flexible working hours, or even financial wellbeing initiatives.

2. Make benefits more visible and accessible

Often, benefits go unused simply because employees aren't fully aware of them or aren't sure how to access them. Focus on clear, consistent communication and make it easy to engage. Regular reminders, highlighting resources in meetings, or even having team leaders promote their own positive experiences with these benefits can help employees see the real value in what's being offered.

3. Present wellbeing as an investment, not a cost

When budgets are tight, wellbeing might seem like an easy target, especially if engagement has been low. But wellbeing isn't just a feel-good initiative, it's a strategic investment. Studies show that investing in employee wellbeing reduces absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover, saving companies money in the long term. This is where you can take the lead by presenting data that illustrates how supporting your employees actually boosts productivity and reduces hidden costs.

4. Drive engagement in creative ways

If engagement has been low, sometimes it helps to refresh how you're promoting wellbeing. Try introducing wellness challenges or small incentives that make it fun and accessible. You might also want to explore different forms of engagement, like offering benefits that can be customized to individual needs or highlighting wellness as a part of your company culture, not just a set of programs.

5. Build trust in wellbeing programs

For employees to engage meaningfully with wellbeing initiatives, they need to trust that these programs are genuinely in their best interest. Often, there can be skepticism or concerns about privacy, especially with mental health resources. Be transparent about how data is handled and ensure confidentiality. Encourage leaders to openly use and advocate for these benefits, signaling that they are valued and safe to engage with.

6. Acknowledge and address the underlying concerns

It's important to recognise the emotional impact that budget cuts can have on both you and your team. Share even if the uptake is low and there are those few who are still using it and withdrawing that support can have its own issues. Acknowledge these feelings openly and use them as a catalyst for positive change.

The goal is to create a wellbeing strategy that's responsive to what employees truly need. When that connection happens, the budget conversation naturally shifts from "cutting" to "investing."

You've got this!



Smriti Joshi, Chief Psychologist, Wysa

A man with short brown hair, glasses, and a beard is smiling while sitting at a desk. He is wearing a blue and green plaid shirt. He is holding a pen over an open notebook and has his other hand on a laptop keyboard. The background is a white wall with a wooden shelf holding a small potted plant and a framed abstract painting with orange and black patterns.

Real life user story

“My therapist introduced me to Wysa and it’s helped me out of my shell”

45-year-old graphic designer and administrative worker, Andrei, from the USA shares how he found Wysa with the help of his therapist and how using Wysa in-between sessions has helped him in both his personal life and career.

"My therapist introduced me to Wysa."

"I've been using Wysa every day for the last three weeks. I recently underwent a medical procedure and it was weighing me down. I felt very apathetic, tired and depressed. I needed to destress myself, so I took charge, got in touch with my therapist and told him that I needed to redouble my recovery effort in order to maintain peace and harmony. We were searching for CBT therapy apps that I could use in between my sessions and then my therapist introduced me to Wysa.

"When I first started using the app, I was surprised that the AI chatbot immediately detected that I had apathy. Overall, the chatbot is able to give me a good direction of what I need on a daily basis. I like it when it gives me positive feedback, because that helps to stay motivated.

"On occasion, there are really stressful days when I practice Wysa's breathing exercises twice or even three times a day."

"I've used the Wysa CBT tools as well as the coaching feature. The tools have helped me reduce stress and reframe my thinking patterns. On occasion, there are really stressful days when I practice Wysa's breathing exercises twice or even three times in a day. The focus meditation and body scans are also really good. The tool pack on the step-by-step grieving process was the most useful I've done in my entire life. I had a poor way of grieving for many years. It helped me to reduce the stress of burdening myself with grief. The sleep stories are another favorite tool because they help me go to sleep right away and get some rest, even immediately after having an insomnia attack. Over time, I plan to try all the tools.

"The tool pack on the step-by-step grieving process was the most useful I've done in my entire life."

I signed up for a short trial with a Wysa coach but was unable to continue it due to financial constraints. However, even in that short period, the coach helped me assess what I needed to work on and guided me in the right direction.

"Wysa's tools have helped me get out of my shell, reconnect with my inner circle and affirm my intention to get better."

"Wysa's tools have helped me get out of my shell, reconnect with my inner circle and affirm my intention to get better. I can see a change in my attitude today. I am more confident than I was over this summer. I am also able to regulate my thoughts in a better way, whereas I had no clue how to do so earlier. I also noticed an improvement in my emotional well-being, in the way that I express myself to other people, and my relationships with my family, including my mom, dad and brother. I am able to give them space and be more mindful towards them. Even on the professional front, Wysa's mindfulness tools have helped me with my career.

"Wysa's mindfulness tools have helped me with my career."

"My current therapist has seen improvements in my mental health since I started using Wysa. Honestly, I feel that I improve a lot more when I use the app than with a therapist. But then I also think they co-relate in a better way because the therapist is like the administrator of your behavioral health while the Wysa app can be a part of different moments of my life in between sessions.

"My current therapist has seen improvements in my mental health since I started using Wysa."

"I use Wysa along with a couple of other free mental health apps that focus on mood tracking and show you how much you're improving. As compared to them, Wysa has superior AI to observe, detect and automate what tools can help with my mental health and emotions.

"Wysa has improved my life and done a lot of good things for me."

"Wysa has improved my life and done a lot of good things for me. I recommended it to my brother and his family when they were struggling after the hurricane in Florida. I've also recommended Wysa to a friend. I feel that most people who have struggled with other mental health apps can try Wysa and benefit from it.

NEW! SAFE AI

Help shape the future of
safe AI in mental health.

Be part of a global initiative to
ensure generative AI is safe,
empathetic, and culturally relevant
for mental health.

Join us to set new standards for
multilingual AI care.

Get involved

wysa

