

# Selfcare in action

## How to motivate your employees and create more energy and resilience

Ever more organisations are taking steps to keep their employees healthy and enthusiastic, be it by way of vitality programmes, attention to mental health, or workplace happiness initiatives. However, in practice, such efforts tend to be fragmented and have not been systematically included within the company policy.

One issue that is often overlooked is the intrinsic motivation of the employees themselves. Many initiatives are imposed from the top down, missing the opportunity of helping employees to themselves take personal responsibility for their well-being. Self-care – the act of consciously taking good care of yourself – plays a key role here. It contributes to long-term employability, prevents sickness absence, and improves job satisfaction. Nevertheless, it by no means always receives the attention it deserves.

In this Orange Paper, we delve into the world of self-care. What exactly does it mean? Why is it relevant in the workplace? And how do you motivate your employees to take good care of themselves?



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## Why self-care?

The theme of self-care is an important issue within society: ever more employees are struggling with stress, health complaints, or financial worries, and employers are looking for ways to prevent sickness absence.

Studies have shown that employees who are healthy and happy in their private lives are more productive and take less time off work through sickness. Employers who succeed in motivating their employees to take good care of themselves reap the rewards.



**Self-care is a key part of well-being in the workplace, not a fad or an unnecessary luxury. There are a great many proven reasons why people should be encouraged to take care of themselves:**

- Almost half the adult population experiences mild to severe symptoms of anxiety or depression.
- Well over a million people in the Netherlands with a job have financial problems.
- And in 2023, over 50% of all people in the Netherlands were overweight, with 16% suffering from obesity.
- At the same time, healthcare professionals are becoming increasingly scarce: 1 in 20 persons in the Netherlands has difficulty finding a GP.

Our healthcare system is breaking down. As an employer, you also have a role. Waiting until things go wrong simply isn't an option. Self-care is necessary for long-term employability.

All figures, regulations, and studies are based on the Dutch market.

## Personal responsibility, but with support from the employer

Striking a balance between employees' personal responsibility and the supporting and motivating role played by the employer is an important element of self-care.

Self-care starts with the individual.

No-one else can go to the gym for your employees, sort out their finances or take a course for them. This is something your employees really will have to do themselves. Whether they actually do so will to a large extent depend on their environment and whether it promotes self-care. As an employer, you are an important part of that environment. By actively encouraging self-care, you give your employees the nudge they need to take better care of themselves.

Thankfully, there is a growing awareness that well-being at work should be a strategic pillar, not an optional HR activity. More and more companies are looking into strengthening positive health and enthusiasm, not just preventing sickness.

While cure and prevention are aimed at the ill and persons at risk, respectively, it is important that you focus on all your employees, including the healthy majority. In this way, you will keep them resilient and energetic.

A good rule of thumb to apply in this connection is:

**80 %**

**Devote 80% of your attention to this broad group (and promote their well-being).**

**20 %**

**With the potential outcome that just 20% or less will end up in the at-risk group (instead of the other way round).**

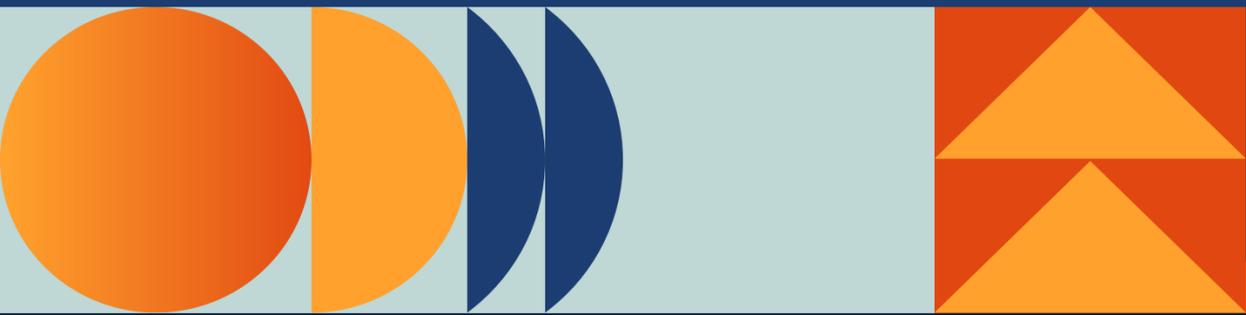
*'You don't have to be ill to get better.'*



## What does self-care entail?

To state clearly what self-care is, we will consider four aspects of our lives that must be in balance: physical fitness, mental fitness, financial fitness, and career fitness. Our data shows that these aspects, in particular, are causes of sickness absence.

On the next page, we will explain all these pillars, providing trends and figures to show why attention in that area is important.



## Physical fitness

Physical fitness is about having a healthy body: having energy, being able to move well, and feeling rested.

### Why is this important?

As an employer, you are required by law to prevent physical stress in the workplace wherever possible. Moreover, encouraging your employees to work proactively on their physical fitness also provides a great many opportunities.

Employees in a good state of physical health take up to 32% less time off work through sickness. However, according to Statistics Netherlands' figures, less than half of all employees get enough exercise. At the same time, physical complaints (like back and shoulder pain or tiredness) are a major cause of long-term absence, especially where physical or hybrid work are concerned.

## Career fitness

Career fitness means that you experience direction, satisfaction, and perspective in your work. You continue to develop, are open to change and do not feel stuck.

### Why is this important?

More than two in five employees wish to develop further, but don't know how to. At the same time, Dutch employees collectively leave 1.5 billion in training budgets unused each year, according to a study by the AWVN employer's organisation.

Uncertainty about your career is an increasingly prevalent stress factor, in particular if you are faced with reorganisations or automation. Employees who do continue to develop are more productive, better motivated, and are retained for 30% longer.

## Mental fitness

Mental fitness means feeling mentally resilient, being able to think clearly, being able to cope with stress, and maintaining a balanced emotional state, including in busy periods and in times of change.

### Why is this important?

Mental health problems are the largest category and account for 40% of long-term absence. TNO figures show that one in six employees experiences burn-out symptoms. Employees with mental health problems are also slower to recover than those suffering from physical complaints. And while your average burn-out costs an employer about €60,000, happy employees are more productive and more profitable. This means that having employees work on their mental fitness you reap two benefits for the price of one.

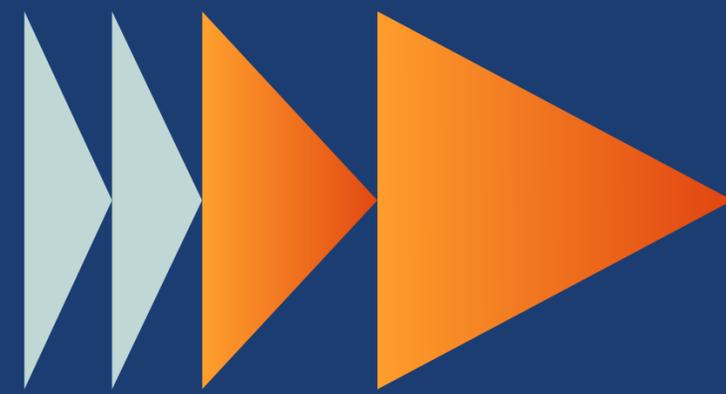
If you want to know more also check out our Orange Paper: 'From missed signs to long-term prevention'.

## Financial fitness

Being financially fit means keeping track of your income and expenditure, being able to save up for unforeseen situations, and not experiencing stress or shame about monetary matters.

### Why is this important?

62% of all Dutch companies have employees with money worries. A Nibud report shows that these employees take seven more sick days per year on average. Financial stress also leads to problems sleeping and impaired concentration.



## Tools and motivation

There are a great many vitality programmes, with various degrees of effectiveness. The thing is, launching a programme is just the first step: how do you, as a manager, persuade your employees to actually start following it?

### → Awareness campaigns

Like self-care September or the [Self Check](#). This way, you will get the conversation started and remove the taboo on asking for help.

### → Direct communication and training, including of managers

Help managers to [recognise signs](#) and provide them with tools to guide their employees towards the programme.

### → Easy access

Examples include flyers with QR codes, posters referring to relevant topics, or an app icon on desktops or telephones.

### → Integrate well-being into your onboarding process

Discuss well-being and self-care during the induction process and indicate what support is available, normalising and drawing attention to it from day one.

### → Share good examples

For instance, stories of colleagues who made use of coaching. Alternatively, if you wish to keep things anonymous, you could share figures about the number of colleagues who have already made use of the facilities in this area. This will inspire others to take similar action themselves.

It is crucial that you, the employer, provide a good example and do not dismiss self-care as being 'soft'. In other words, help your employees to take care of themselves before they become incapable of doing so and professional help becomes unavoidable.



## Onboarding as the key to impact Customer testimonial

The Reinaerde healthcare institution wanted to firmly embed the well-being of its 2,500 or so employees in the organisation, turning it into an integral part of their day-to-day work. With a well-thought-out onboarding strategy and active participation by managers, the Evermood platform was quickly embraced.

Lisa van Dordrecht-Visser, Vitality and Employability Adviser: 'Evermood gives us an easily accessible platform that allows employees to find out what helps them directly, without having to go through others.' The assistance on offer ranges from coaching and training to their own interventions, such as post-incident response or staff welfare services.

Motivating employees continues to be a challenge. That is why Reinaerde actively uses its managers to talk about self-care. 'For instance, we give them cards that they can hand over to a staff member when they pick up on signs', HR Process Supervisor Liesbeth Bosman tells us. Carefully selected moments, such as a September campaign to raise awareness of self-care after the summer, also help.

'If you draw attention to it, you'll find that people are quicker to act', Liesbeth says. 'It is about making employees feel that facilities are available for them, without being patronising. It is a gift.'

Discover how Reinaerde and Evermood work together to make self-care the norm: [Onboarding as the key to impact - Evermood](#)



## Encourage self-care using an easily accessible solution

Evermood is the most complete self-care platform, provided by employers. Through coaching, practical tips and online workshops, you can bolster your employees precisely when they most need this.

### Outcome

**1** 30% more satisfied with employer on average.

**2** Employees use Evermood 25% more than traditional programs.

**3** Spotting the signs early and preventive support can lead to a 10-15% drop in sickness absence.

**4** Data-driven (anonymised) insights about what is going on among employees, allowing for targeted interventions.

If you would like to know more about the options for your organisation, visit [www.evermood.com](http://www.evermood.com)

## From awareness to self-action

The figures do not lie: whether it's physical health, mental balance, financial peace of mind, or career prospects, employees often feel under pressure. By taking good care of themselves, they promote positive well-being.

And employees who take good care of themselves will perform better, have more job satisfaction and stay healthy for longer. Employers play a key role in this by creating an environment in which self-care is normal and accessible.

Using the right approach, you can create a culture in which employees slow down or ask for help in good time. The fact is, investing in well-being always pays off, even with healthy employees.



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