According to Mental Health Index: Employees’ Ability to Focus Attention and Complete Tasks Down 31%

Chronic State of Anxiety and Stress Negatively Impacting Workers’ Cognitive Performance

SAN FRANCISCO and WASHINGTON, D.C., Sept. 17, 2020 – Americans have been living in a highly-prolonged state of unpredictability amid COVID-19. The consequence of this chronic stress, anxiety and depressive mood is the declining cognitive performance of the nation’s workers. According to the Mental Health Index: U.S. Worker Edition, sustained attention, the driver of task completion, is down 31% in August when compared to February pre-pandemic. Planning, the capacity to make decisions and drive strategy, is down 15% since February.

Additional findings from Total Brain’s clinically-validated brain assessments reveal millennials, those who in the past have been shown to be among the most emotionally vulnerable groups in the COVID-19 era, are now among those showing the greatest signs of cognitive decline. According to Index findings, working Americans ages 20-39 are experiencing a:

- 39% decline in sustained attention
- 30% decline in planning


“Physically, our body reacts to stress by creating a hormone called cortisol. Under chronic stress, high levels of cortisol for long periods of time derail key brain, heart and digestive system functions,” explained Louis Gagnon, CEO, Total Brain. “Mentally, stress contracts our mind and reduces the cognitive flexibility that is necessary to put things in perspective, create and collaborate. Today, the Mental Health Index is demonstrating this at scale.”

“Six months into the pandemic, it is clear that our nation’s workers are experiencing mental and emotional exhaustion,” said Colleen McHugh, President, Health Care Policy Roundtable, Executive Vice President, American Health Policy Institute and Strategic Advisor for HR Policy Association. “Although employee mental wellness is of paramount concern to HR Policy member companies, in a recent membership survey, fewer than half (41%) of responding companies reported having measures in place to check the stress and resilience levels of their employees. We are working with these large employers to implement new ways they can care for their employees during these uncertain times and beyond.”
Garen Staglin, Chairman of One Mind at Work, commented, “As workers’ continue to grapple with the uncertainty related to the pandemic and other current events, employers must prioritize the wellbeing of their employees by taking seriously the impact of chronic stress. Now is the time for employers to implement programs and support systems to combat the stigma and discrimination that often comes with mental health conditions.”

“The cumulative impact of stressors as a result of COVID-19 is starting to take a serious toll on the effectiveness of the American worker,” said Michael Thompson, President, and CEO, National Alliance. “Companies need to double down on efforts to connect with and support their employees.”

The full Mental Health Index results can be found here. For more information and additional insights there will be a complimentary 30-minute webinar on Friday, September 18 at 12 p.m. ET. Joining Gagnon, McHugh, Staglin and Thompson is Rosa Novo, Executive Benefits Director for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Register here: https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3806035773333986571.

###

**Methodology:** The Mental Health Index: U.S. Worker Edition contains data drawn from a weekly randomized sample of 500 working Americans taken from a larger universe of Total Brain users. The Index is NOT a survey or a poll. Data is culled from neuroscientific brain assessments using standardized digital tasks and questions from the Total Brain platform. Participants include workers from all walks of life and regions, job levels, occupations, industries, and types of organizations (public vs. private). The brain assessments used to compile the Mental Health Index were taken weekly from February 3 to August 30, 2020.

**About Total Brain:** Total Brain is based in San Francisco and publicly listed in Sydney, AUS (ASX:TTB). Total Brain is a mental health and brain performance monitoring and support platform that has more than 850,000 registered users. Benefits for employers and payers include productivity improvement and healthcare cost reduction. totalbrain.com

**About the National Alliance:** The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions (National Alliance) is the only nonprofit, purchaser-led organization with a national and regional structure dedicated to driving health and healthcare value across the country. Its members represent private and public sector, nonprofit, and Taft-Hartley organizations, and more than 45 million Americans spending over $300 billion annually on healthcare. nationalalliancehealth.org

**About One Mind:** One Mind at Work is a leading mental health non-profit that catalyzes comprehensive action across the scale of the brain health crisis, working from science to patients to society. Moving towards its VISION of HEALTHY BRAINS FOR ALL, One Mind is accelerating treatments and cures for mental disorders and providing hope to patients and their families. Launched in 2017, One Mind at Work is a global coalition of leaders from diverse sectors who have joined together to transform approaches to mental health and addiction. One Mind at Work now includes more than 25 global employers and 18 research and content partners. The coalition covers nearly 6 million people under its charter. onemindatwork.org
**HR Policy Association**: HR Policy Association is the lead organization representing Chief Human Resource Officers at major employers. The Association consists of over 390 of the largest corporations doing business in the United States and globally, and these employers are represented in the organization by their most senior human resource executive. Collectively, their companies employ more than 10 million employees in the United States, over nine percent of the private sector workforce, and 20 million employees worldwide. These senior corporate officers participate in the Association because of their commitment to improving the direction of human resource policy. [hrpolicy.org](http://hrpolicy.org)

**American Health Policy Institute**: American Health Policy Institute is a non-partisan non-profit think tank, started by the HR Policy Foundation that examines the practical implications of health policy changes through the lens of large employers. The Institute examines the challenges employers face in providing health care to their employees and recommends policy solutions to promote the provision of affordable, high-quality, employer-based health care. The Institute serves to provide thought leadership grounded in the practical experience of America’s largest employers. Their mission is to develop impactful strategies to ensure that those purchasing health care are able to not only bend the cost curve, but actually break it, by keeping health care cost inflation in line with general inflation. [americanhealthpolicy.org](http://americanhealthpolicy.org)