

# MindQ&A

From the Minds of the Experts

## Nancy Board, Co-founder & COO, Global Women 4 Wellbeing



*Nancy Board has spent her career focused on mental health and mental wellbeing via a variety of channels. She is currently the Co-founder and COO of Global Women 4 Wellbeing, an organization that focuses on better research for women's health and wellbeing issues with the goal of empowering women to create better health and wellbeing for themselves, their businesses, and their communities.*

**MindQ:** Hi Nancy, thank you so much for sitting down with us today! Would you like to start with some background information?

**Nancy Board:** Sure. I've spent my entire career focused on mental health and mental wellbeing - primarily in workplaces. My career path has been all across the U.S. domestically, and I've enjoyed about 10 years working internationally exclusively. I've also spent time in hospital settings, running a treatment program for adolescents and adults struggling with addictions. I was a hospital administrator early on in my career and also focused on the policy and strategic side of program development – looking at best practices in building resilience and emotional and mental wellness and wellbeing. I am happy to have this opportunity to talk with you, share some expertise, and hopefully some positive insights.

**MindQ:** How, in an ideal world, do you see mental wellbeing being addressed by employers or just being addressed in general by the public?

**Nancy Board:** In an ideal world, mental wellbeing would be seen as something completely normal. There's never stigma attached to it. Everybody in the world would be perfectly okay talking about any challenges that they may have in their mental state or mental wellbeing. Unfortunately, we know there's still a great deal of stigma with mental illness and even stigma related to the term “mental health.” There shouldn't be. I mean, we're not people whose bodies are separated at the neck. Yet many people think what happens up here - in the head - unless it's ear, nose, and throat - anything in the brain in terms of our feeling or emotions, is off the table for discussion. But we don't shut down our mental health when we walk into the workplace or walk in to see a doctor. In an ideal world, mental health and dealing with our emotional health would be completely normalized. Everyone would accept it and realize it's an integral part of our overall health and wellbeing.

**MindQ:** To expand upon that, you talked a lot about stigma and perception. How do you feel organizations can help reduce or lower that stigma, to make people feel comfortable?

**Nancy Board:** The best thing that can lower stigma is when there is support from the top-down in an organization. If the CEO of a company talks about her or his own mental health journey, or say they've got a family member that's really struggled with a mental health challenge which they speak about openly, that sends the message to the staff that they too have permission to open up a little bit more, and realize that, "Hey, maybe we can really talk about this here." They have to see and believe that it is a safe topic to address at work. It needs to be more than just offering “initiatives and programs” – employees have to believe there is trust within their organization and that if they disclose mental health concerns or challenges, it won't jeopardize their employment in any way but rather is something they will receive support for, without retribution. I've seen a lot of CEOs pay lip service to the importance of this topic only to lack real support for it further down within the ranks. That's a problem.

Another way to support people is through visibility. Even though programs and initiatives are just one aspect of making change in an organization culturally, if there is permission to see a therapist, go to the EAP, or attend a massage treatment, or there are programs and classes that people can attend at no cost to them, that normalizes the

conversation. Anything like that is really a best practice. Normalizing mental health as we do with medical health can really make a difference for people. If one feels like this is something normal, they'll more likely seek help.

**MindQ:** From what you've seen in the workplace, or in your experience, are there some interesting solutions that you'd like to speak a little bit more to?

**Nancy Board:** It's an interesting question because there are some old-school techniques that are tried and true that I would still recommend. Then there's a lot of new stuff - mostly related to technology. My approach over the years is to meet people where they are. If I'm meeting someone who is very much into technology and savvy, then what I might recommend to her or him would be different apps or programs that they're more comfortable navigating on their phone or tablet.

However, I would still recommend face-to-face or in-person interaction to get at the heart of what's happening. Making a personal connection with the right professional can do wonders. Sitting down and talking, conducting a thorough assessment, and developing an action plan together is a supportive intervention. I think people can do that better than apps can. I believe face-to-face interaction and really being seen and heard is so important.

**MindQ:** Yes, that conversation of old versus new, or technology versus traditional, that's really helpful. From a personal perspective, are there specific techniques that you use or activities that you do to keep yourself feeling your best?

**Nancy Board:** That's a great question. I am a huge believer of practicing gratitude and grace. I think everybody can benefit from practices of gratitude, mindfulness, having more compassion, and exploring positive psychology. Our minds are so powerful, and what we think about - what thoughts we give attention to - is critical to our wellbeing. I also believe in proper nutrition, getting adequate sleep, enough exercise, and having a strong support system around you is key in combating mental health challenges.

But having said that, there is a category of people that are struggling with clinical depression. No matter what you might say to them, such as "Just be more positive; start practicing gratitude, meditation, etc." it doesn't necessarily mean that that's going to take them out of a deep, deep state of depression. There are certain disease conditions that we need to be aware of. Not everybody can just 'snap out of it' easily. People that are truly struggling need to see a specialist and sometimes medication is necessary. Some people will need professional help. I mean, increased suicide rates are real - not just in our country, but worldwide. We're seeing more and more of it and people need real support and solutions - not more stigma and silence. That's where technology sometimes separates us from our humanness. When people are really struggling and deeply depressed - contemplating suicide - they need that personal connection and help from a specialist.

But for the general public, yes - practicing mindfulness, gratitude, getting regular exercise, having proper nutrition, having a strong support system and exploring positive psychology are all wonderful ways of increasing our mental wellbeing.

**MindQ:** Nancy, thank you so much for your perspective. We really appreciate you taking the time to have this conversation and look forward to sharing it with our community.

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**About MindQ:** Current wellness screenings oversimplify mental health and wellbeing. The clinically validated MindQ Assessment evaluates the full mental wellbeing spectrum: job satisfaction, financial wellbeing, personal fulfillment, stress coping, anxiety, and depression. MindQ Wellbeing Activities teach employees positive life change through optimism, compassion, and gratitude. Reporting effectively evaluates employee mental wellbeing and provides opportunities to connect to interventions and education.

Lead the conversation with the most cost-effective, clinically validated mental wellbeing solution. To learn more about how MindQ addresses mental health in the workplace, visit [mindq.com](https://mindq.com).