



HEROForum21

October 11-15, 2020 | Austin, Texas

Bouncing Back: Boosting Mental Resilience and Building Organizational Immunity

Our Forum21 theme explores how resilient organizations are reshaping their health and well-being initiatives to boost employee mental health, dismantle systemic racism, and cultivate community partnerships that will rebuild trust in institutions. The worksite health promotion movement grew up as a strategy for boosting productivity and managing healthcare costs related to chronic diseases. The good news is that the same lifestyle factors that reduce metabolic risks are those that also boost immunity to infections. The bad news, though, is that the pandemic laid bare how readily an infectious disease can discriminate against essential versus non-essential workers, between the obese and the fit, and along racial and economic lines. Businesses that bounce back stronger in 2021 will be those that boldly reimagine organizational well-being and commit to redesigning work and wellness in ways that strengthen immunity for all in the workforce by redressing the inequality experienced by too many.

This HERO conference will be held as our nation rides the “second wave,” that is, we will be paying the mental health toll from the pandemic at a time when we have barely recovered from the physical, economic and social tolls that have already left us spent. Still, our optimistic “bouncing back” imagery for this Forum’s theme is a nod to the imagination and positivity that has always been a strength of the worksite health promotion professional community. At Forum21, we will feature organizations with stories to share about how the pandemic has changed, and will continue to reshape, their workplace mental health services. Experts in resiliency, stress management, and positive psychology principles will describe best practices and future trends in how individuals and organizations effectively adapt after significant setbacks. And with a goal of containing future contagions, we will carry forward our efforts at reckoning with systemic racism, understanding mental health disparities, and sharing research and innovations that make our profession better and better at promoting health for all.

HERO **so** looks forward to reconvening face to face with so many friends and professional colleagues whom we’ve missed seeing in person. So, it should not go without saying that HERO’s usual “fun factor” conference components will be back in full force, and we’ll happily be “keepin’ it weird” in Austin. (Line dance anyone?) As Stevie Ray Vaughn, Austin’s iconic rock star, said: “If time is all that we got, then baby let’s take it. Lovin’ is a lovin’. The moment is a-right.”

A Note on pandemic related planning for 2021: As much as we’re anticipating a return to face-to-face meetings later in 2021, it is too soon to know how many attendees will be comfortable with travel or able to budget for travel in 2021. Accordingly, HEROForum21 will be a hybrid conference with live on-site presentations in Austin, live remote sessions, and pre-recorded, on-demand sessions.

Presentation tracks for HEROForum21 Bouncing Back: Boosting Mental Resilience and Building Organizational Immunity

HERO welcomes presentation submissions from all organizational sectors that have innovative employee health and well-being initiatives to share and stories to tell, successes or setbacks, that help move our profession forward. Our conference attendees are primarily experienced human resources professionals and formally trained health promotion program providers. Accordingly, we favor presentations to go beyond “show and tell” about what programs and initiatives you are offering and, instead, go deeper into barriers you’ve encountered, novel strategies you’re testing, and evaluation results that are shaping your future plans. Our faculty selection criteria are also weighted toward presentations aligned with our conference theme and those that are being given for the first time. We are less interested in “motivational speakers” and more interested in authentic professionals who are surviving, if not thriving, in the school of hard knocks and who value sharing their stories in highly interactive and energetic learning sessions. Health promotion experts who provide wellness services to companies are encouraged to submit presentations and are required to fill out HERO’s non-commercialism pledge. Also, presenters from wellness services companies are required to have an employer co-presenter.

Six Presentation Tracks for HEROForum21:

1. **Worksite Health Promotion 101.** This learning track accommodates Forum21 participants who are new to the profession or who are not formally trained in health promotion. Presenters in this track are encouraged to teach about the theories behind their population health initiatives and mental health services and explain both the strengths and limitations of their approach. These 101 sessions should offer ample opportunities for participants to ask questions about what works and what doesn’t work in population health management.
2. **Worksite Health Promotion 401.** Preeminent health promotion scholar Dr. Larry Green often says: “If we want more research-based practice we need more practice-based research.” This track is intended for experienced researchers and practitioners aiming to meet Green’s challenge. Top experts in population health management with technical, clinical, and research-based presentations are encouraged to submit in this track.
3. **Braving the Second Wave.** Presentations on boosting mental resilience, reimagining employee assistance programs, and sharing research or practice innovations designed to support post pandemic stress and anxiety. We also encourage presentations about improving how mental health disparities can be uncovered and addressed.
4. **Dismantling Systemic Racism at the Workplace.** We are eager for presentations on improvements and progress being made in diversity, equity, and inclusion offerings at workplaces. In particular we invite you to share your efforts at better integration between how you are addressing issues of racial equity and how you are designing your overall health and well-being strategy.
5. **Pandemic Preparedness and Wellness.** What have we learned from the coronavirus that will change how we organize health and well-being initiatives in the future? How are your EAP or health coaching or lifestyle education offerings being recalibrated to anticipate the next infectious disease outbreak?
6. **Measures That Matter.** What new data is informing your health and well-being strategic planning? What measures are more meaningful to your organization post pandemic? How are you recognizing and reconciling health disparities? Do you have new research results to share or program evaluation data to report that is helping you make improvements in your program offerings or employee benefits?