

BUILDING FROM A SOLID FOUNDATION

*How Prudential Financial is Reducing Stigma and Creating
an Aligned Approach to Employee Mental Health*



INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANDY CRIGHTON, CMO OF PRUDENTIAL FINANCIAL

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with

DR. ANDY CRIGHTON

ABOUT K. ANDREW CRIGHTON, MD CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, PRUDENTIAL



Dr. Crighton is Chief Medical Officer of Prudential Financial. His responsibilities in this role include global health and safety. He also provides leadership for Prudential's medical clinics, fitness facilities, Employee Assistance Program, and Work Life and Accommodation programs.

Dr. Crighton is the immediate past Chair of the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO). As a former Chair of the NJ Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation, he championed regionalization efforts to combine with five other chapters to form the Northeast Region in 2010. He currently serves on the national board of the Arthritis Foundation and is Chair for the Northeast Region. A charter board member of the Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition, Dr. Crighton is a member of the American College of Physicians, American College of Physician Executives, American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and American Academy of Insurance Medicine. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and a Certified Physician Executive.

Dr. Crighton has held leadership positions within both health care institutions and corporations. His interests lie in total health management, including health care effectiveness and its interaction on productivity in a corporate environment.

ABOUT SARA MARTIN RAUCH, MS DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY & PLANNING, WELCOA



Sara's purpose is helping people fulfill their highest potential in work and life through corporate health promotion. She has launched award winning wellness programs, created new wellness products, and engineered work environments to create cultures of health across multiple industries. At WELCOA, she is responsible for conceptualizing the strategy behind new innovative products and bringing them to market, developing new content and content channels and maintaining relationships with WELCOA's network of business partners and content providers. She has been a session and keynote speaker at a variety of community and national events including National Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) Conference, the Art and Science of Health Promotion Conference, and the National WELCOA Training Summit. She sits on the Johns Hopkins Mental Health in the Workplace Advisory Council, the CDC Workplace Health Resource Center Steering Committee, and has served as Ambassador for the American Association of University Women.

Sara's background includes corporate training, organizational development, and health promotion management. Before joining the WELCOA Team, Sara managed the award-winning Well@Work employee wellness program for the 5,000 employees of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and served as Health Management Consultant for the BlueCross commercial book of business. Sara received her BA in Psychology from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and her M.S. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

In this interview, WELCOA's Sara Martin Rauch sits down with Prudential Financial's Chief Medical Officer Andy Crighton to get a better sense of how Prudential Financial, a Fortune 500 Global Company, has created a standout mental health strategy, and what the outcomes are for their employees and their business.

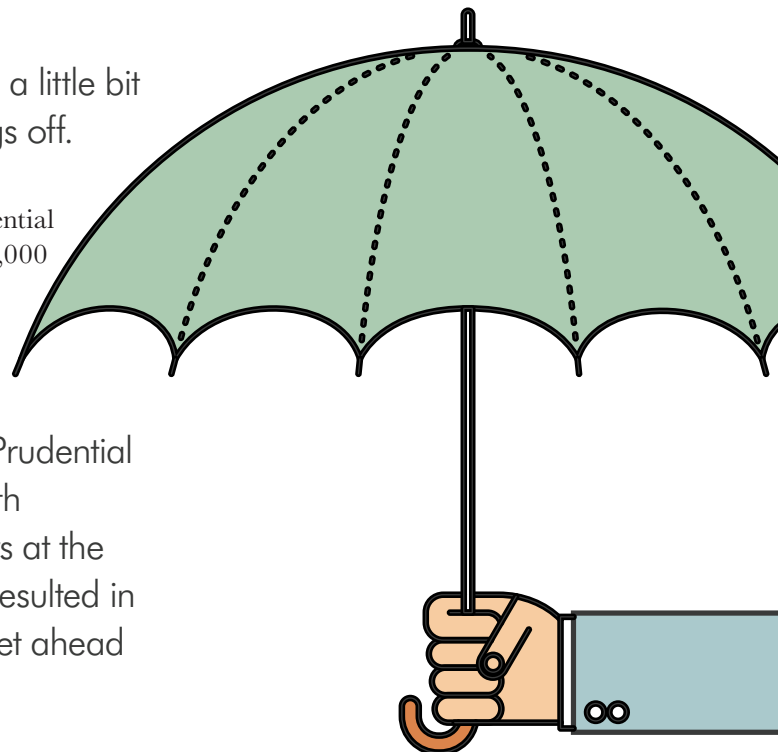
★ **SARA RAUCH** You and I first met in Baltimore at the Johns Hopkins Mental Health Summit and that's when we both first met Rich Mattingly. The story of the [Luv u Project](#) that Rich founded is an incredibly moving one, as you know. It just doesn't stop touching people. These are human stories, and we all have one whether it be personally or through a loved one. When I talked with Rich, I asked "Who's really doing a good job of addressing mental health at work?" And he said Prudential. I'm sure there are others, but I'm grateful to be able to share this perspective in tandem with Rich's. So thank you.

I'd love for you to start just by introducing yourself and a little bit about you and what you do for Prudential to kick things off.

ANDY CRIGHTON I'm the Chief Medical Officer at Prudential Financial and responsible for health and safety globally with about 50,000 employees worldwide of which 20,000 are in the U.S. In the U.S. we have onsite clinics, behavioral health, fitness, wellness; all within one umbrella of our overall health strategy.

★ **SR** What we're going to be talking about is what Prudential Financial has done specifically to address issues of both mental health disorders and substance abuse disorders at the workplace. My first question is what was the why that resulted in Prudential and its leadership taking an active role to get ahead of the curve and begin addressing mental health?

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AC It was more of an evolution. Prudential has been pretty progressive even before I came on board. We've had onsite EAP people since the 1980's; at that time it was focused on substance abuse. But since my tenure of 17 years here, it's evolved into how emotional health and mental health really interplay with our work activities day to day and in the business. A lot of it was driven by our data—we've had a data warehouse since 2004—as well as our own experience with our onsite behavioral health consultants and our clinics and nurses. Our return-to-work and accommodations process, which we've had for several years now, where we see the impact of mental health impeding people's ability to return back to work in a timely manner and many times successfully.

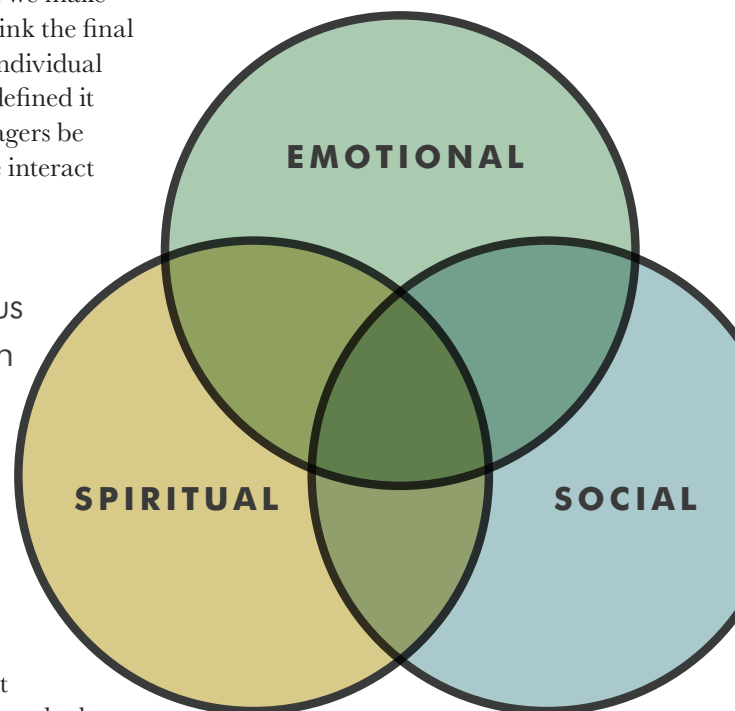
★ **SR** One of the reasons this conversation is important is that most people want to do a better job of identifying and accommodating mental health and substance abuse problems, and they feel like their hands are tied or they don't really know where to start. So, let's demystify it for people; what is the Prudential approach?

AC I think the first is foundational. It's one of the five key components in our whole health strategy, which we define as the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial aspects of health. And as we step back and look at mental health, three of those components really come together: the emotional, the social, and the spiritual. We define spiritual as if people have a shared purpose and feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. So I think that's foundational, but the other thing that we have done is really focused on reducing the stigma and getting individuals to talk about their own experience. We have had a couple of leaders talk about their experience with mental health, substance abuse and depression. And then we make sure that it is an inclusive environment, that there's trust and support. I think the final thing is that most people look at these dimensions of health from just the individual perspective, and we have defined it from that perspective. But we've also defined it from an organizational perspective. So what should supervisors and managers be responsible for? And then also from a community perspective and how we interact and support the community.

★ **SR** I love that you are mentioning that. In order for us to be really impactful, we have to think about the way an organization impacts the employee and ask questions about how the work climate might be contributing to poor health. Have you experienced that many organizations put too much focus on defining mental health from the individual perspective?

AC I think so. And I think the other place it is coming from—and I don't know if it's a mistake or narrowness—is a medical cost perspective. But if you look

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at the work environment, it really is tied more to your talent initiative. A lot of us have employee opinion surveys and look at engagement quotients, and those are great measurements that can be applied to the health perspective too. We see the work environment as a big driver in health outcomes. You are then really focused on the health of all of your employee population, not just those that take your medical plan.

★ **SR** I could not agree more. How does Prudential Financial approach the need for scientific based facts in your efforts? And what are the tangible results that you seek? What are you really hoping to achieve through these practices around mental health?

AC I think the number one thing is showing leaders that they should not be afraid of this; they should embrace it, and we should present their role in this. We use a lot of our own data. We have had a data warehouse for a long time that includes the medical and pharmacy claims and results from the health risk appraisal. We are able to profile the various businesses and then go and talk to the leaders. We can also build in stories and tie in those stories with the data to really solidify the need to address these issues. And, second of all, create the roadmap of how we can help them along. So we're more of a consultant for them to make some changes.

★ **SR** What is the role of management and leadership in this process?

AC Wow. You know what? I think they own a lot of it, which is something they don't always see. Again, as we focus on our definitions of health and show them where they do own it, it's big. They create the environment that develops that trust—that support—for people who are maybe having an issue. They can come to their managers. They feel free to talk to them. Or at least managers can direct them to the right resources. Their role is to just address the behavior and how it relates to performance. Their role is not to diagnose, but get them to the right resources. So I'd say they own a large part of it.

★ **SR** I think a lot of us feel concerned about a management-lead approach because they are concerned about the legality of those interactions. Could you walk us through what an interaction might look like between a manager and an employee who is believed to be struggling with a mental health or substance use problem?

AC First of all, we don't want them to even try to decide if they have a mental health or substance abuse problem. We want them just to address the behavior in the workplace. We have independent contractors who are behavioral health counselors

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embedded in the business. If there is something going on, we will have one of our behavioral health consultants with them to say, “You know what? You don’t have to worry about this end. You have to worry about the behavior and how it’s interacting with your team and your ability to get the work done. So focus on the behavior.”

Second thing is, a lot of times when someone has inappropriate or bad behavior in the workplace, we find a number of managers want to back away from them and give them more space. Our previous VP of Behavioral Health said that when you do that, the employee will fill that space with whatever. So, again, we’re coaching the supervisor to then get closer to the person, get more directive, set out weekly meetings, whatever it is. But make sure the goals and what you expect from the person are very clear.

So, if the employee is willing to work with one of our behavioral health consultants, then they will be connected with the right set of resources and accommodations. Then we always use another behavioral health consultant to then coach and help that manager too.

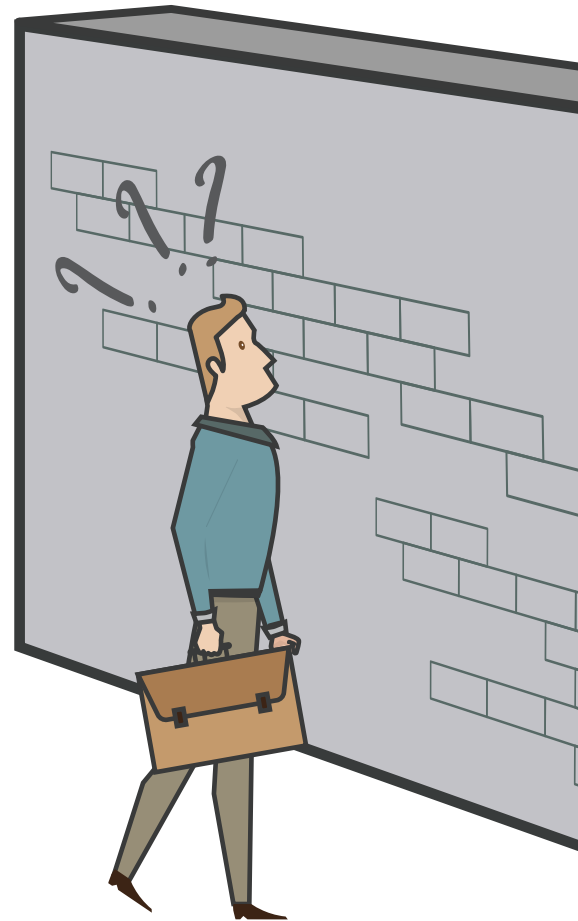
★ **S R** I think many organizations do shy away from addressing the mental health of their employees because they don’t know where to start. They fear ramifications of handling things the wrong way, so they freeze up and don’t handle things at all—or as you say, they back away from the employee. What do you see as the major barriers to addressing mental health issues in the workplace?

A C I think it is this lack of understanding of what the organization’s role is. I think it is fear of saying the wrong thing, and it’s not being comfortable with managing the situation. You know, we don’t have managers that are experts in this because otherwise they’re seeing it way too often. So I think some of the barriers are just feeling isolated and alone and not knowing where to go. And that’s where we’re trying to make those connections and always be out there marketing the service, making sure that we have the contacts that can then escalate it to us or Human Resource Consultants. I think the last barrier is, and we’ve kind of alluded with the previous question is, they want to jump to a diagnosis and a reason why, rather than just focusing on the behavior.

★ **S R** Those barriers do not seem to have kept Prudential from doing great work in this area. How does Prudential navigate and overcome them?

A C We try not to medicalize everything. We come at it from the business perspective. So if we are talking to a manager who has a concern about an employee, we’re talking to the business during these interactions. We are saying things like, “How is it impacting your operation, your team?” or “What are you

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looking for from this?” And then we’re right there with them through the whole issue. On the flipside, and I’ll go to the very extreme, if we are witnessing abnormal behavior that could be threatening the workplace, we have a whole team that comes together between our Behavioral Health, our Global Security, our Employee Relations, our HR Law, that serve as a rapid response team. They will come together to address a situation if there’s a potential threat in the workplace. I feel that our goal of supporting the manager is well received. And a lot of times, it’s word of mouth among managers where one might say to another, “I had this case, here’s what happened and it was a success.” That helps us too.

★ **SR** Something I found particularly noteworthy in hearing from you and other Prudential employees at the [2016] Mental Health Summit is that you don’t just talk about a culture of caring and responsibility at Prudential. It’s really something that you speak about very naturally and it seems to be very much a part of your organizational DNA. Can you help us understand how that happened?

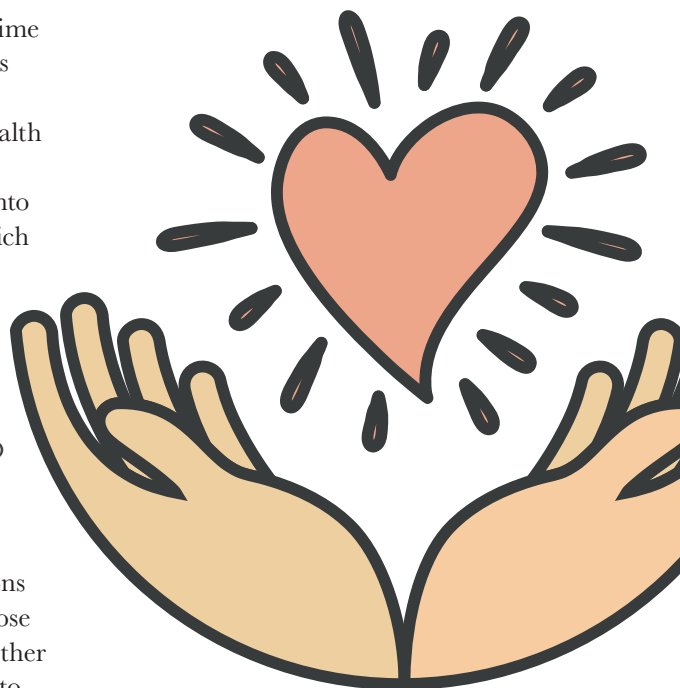
AC I wish I knew. I think we’ve always been talking about this holistically. I go back to when we launched our health risk appraisal in 2007. We went to the employees and did focus groups and surveys on what they were looking for. And they said, “Well, if we do this, we don’t want it shared with the medical plan.” At the time, most people were sharing it with the medical plan. Then we said, “Okay, but it’s your data. You’ve got to do something with it.” As we have built this over time, we have to have the trust. If you don’t have the trust, nothing else happens.

We’re out there all the time doing something with the employees, not to the employees, from a wellness perspective. I think they appreciate it. I think any time we talk about it, we talk about these five dimensions of health and we tell stories that illustrate what those five dimensions mean. We want our people to look at health holistically. It just seems that the medical system wants to medicalize health and put everything into, blood pressure, cholesterol, and things like that. And that doesn’t always translate for people, especially as we get more millennials into the workplace. They’re looking at work/life balance. Same for us in the sandwich generation, we need the flexibility; we’re caretakers for aging parents. We’re building those needs into our whole health profile.

★ **SR** That’s a very positive shift. What is a success story that you think highlights the work that you’re doing to address mental health or substance abuse at Prudential?

AC There are a couple. The first one is that a leader in one of our organizations was having a substance abuse problem. This was a highly valued employee whose behavior just started changing, and it was due to the substance abuse. And another leader of that organization noticed the behavior, came to us, and we were able to

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address it by getting that employee into treatment. They recovered and it was a success for that business group. What was really nice was the two leaders decided to go public for us and do a video where they told their different perspectives of this story and how it then impacted the business positively. I think the biggest thing that we drive home was there was trust between that employee and their leader because they were able to raise the issue with them and talk about it.

The other story that comes to mind is we had a summit on substance abuse, depression and domestic violence. We had three different people tell their story in a Town Hall that was televised through Prudential. It was so powerful that these people were willing to share their stories that we had others coming up to them and saying, “You know what? Your story shook me so much and I had a problem with alcohol. And after hearing your story, I went for treatment and it helped me.”

So, it’s one of those things that snowballs. You can send a letter out. You can do all these things, but I think these personal stories of triumph really resonate with the rest of the population.

★ **SM** Andy, it’s really cool to hear those stories and see the ways that Prudential has created win-wins between individuals and organizations.

AC The importance of work environment and knowing your people is what we really stress to managers. You need to know your people very well so that you can intervene appropriately. There are two employees who come to mind who are struggling with depression. Both of them took different jobs, and the cause of their depression largely stemmed from being in a toxic work environment. One had to go on disability as a result, then was able to transfer back into a supportive work environment and then do well again. So, the work environment really drives, can drive a lot of this. Now both of these employees are in a very supportive work environment, flourishing and doing well. And I like that word “flourish.” It kind of sums up where people should be.

★ **SM** The story behind the [Luv u Project](#) underscores the impact to employees, their families and the broader community if workplace mental health issues aren’t managed well. Prudential seems to have a true concern for the universe of people who are touched—the coworkers and families—by the risk management approach an organization takes when an employee faces a trying time or is identified as high-risk. Is there anything specific that you would like to share about what you believe is the overall value to Prudential or to organizations at large for

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proactively developing policies and procedures for addressing mental health issues?

AC When you have a severe event in the work environment—and what Rich and his family experienced is the ultimate severe event—that might not be where it stops. What we have to wake up to is the fact that this may not be just an isolated event that just happens to the people that are initially present. There are ripple effects too. This is a systemic issue and it requires a solution that casts a wide net. You can't know the ripple effect of how many people down the line that were impacted too. I think too many times we're focused on the incident, and once the incident's resolved, we think, "Okay, we wash our hands. We did great job." And we walk away.

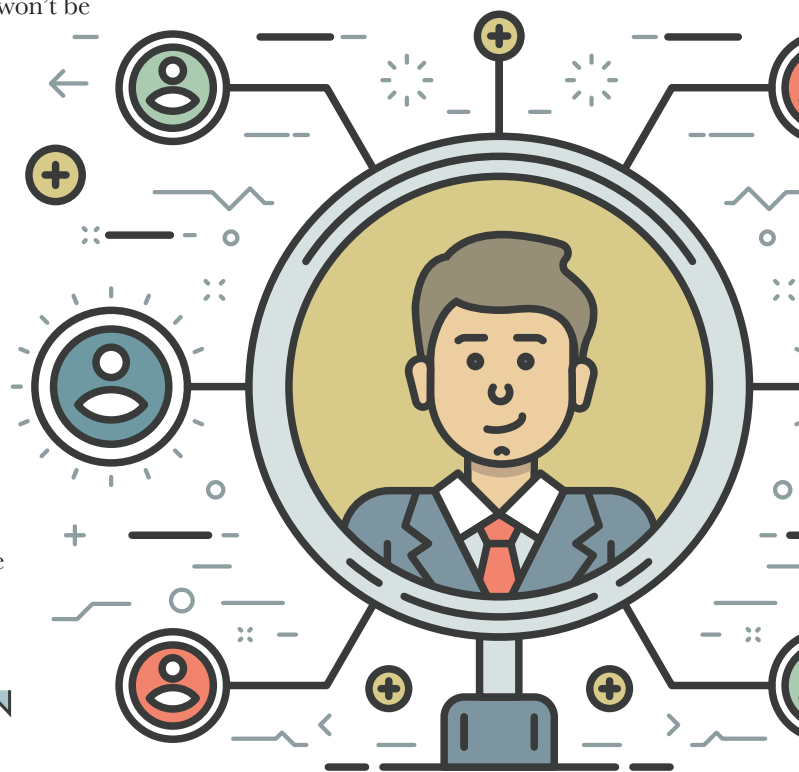
★ **SM** Prudential is an American Fortune Global 500 company. It has a great reputation in the marketplace. How does Prudential see this commitment to mental health fitting in from a business perspective?

AC I go back to the talent. Mental health, and health in general, is, as you know, not over here as a total reward or a benefit. It really is tied to the way we get our work done. Many of us anymore work in team environments, and there is a lot of interaction from that standpoint. From a business imperative perspective, you have to make sure that work groups are optimized in the way they work, and to do that, you have to bring that mental health perspective in. Otherwise you won't be as successful as you can in your operations and business.

★ **SM** Andy, this has been great. Is there anything that we didn't touch on that you wanted to share with our readers?

AC Yeah, I think there is one thing. It is that as you create this culture or whatever you want to call it, there has to be a strategy behind it. It cannot just be program. Anything successful has to have a strategy, a mission, some goals. The other thing is look for internal partnerships. I think so many times people want to go buy a vendor to do this work, but sometimes we have to fix it ourselves. And so what we have done in Prudential is find internal partners that solidify our message. So it's our ethics department, it's our office of diversity and inclusion, it's our talent organization. We embed this message of health and what the manager's responsibility is into these other trainings that these other groups are doing because we can't do it all on our own. But then it really solidifies our message. 🏠

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17002 MARCY STREET, SUITE 140 | OMAHA, NE 68118
402.827.3590 | WELCOA.ORG

