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I came across this on Human Resources Executive Online -- [“Getting Tough”](#) -- about employers making wellness programs mandatory. Does this strike anyone else as ironic, akin to all those things parents do and children hate “for their own good”?

Whether employees like it or not, whether they look for another job, or whether they just pay the penalty for being a wellness party pooper, more and more companies are planning to put sharp teeth into their wellness plans. Almost half of large employers already collect penalties from employees or plan to start in the next few years.

In order to do that, companies have to offer a wellness plan and an alternative for meeting the health goals. HIPAA requires this, and health reform law allows the penalties to be as high as 30 percent of premiums. I expect a lot of interest in wellness plans: Employers will be looking for every which way to get their costs down.

Employers struggle to influence their employees’ health, overlooking the huge impact that the workplace itself has. For example, a company makes their employees’ health worse by staying silent about when more layoffs are coming. Studies show that employees worried about their jobs have higher blood pressure, more alcohol use, more heart attacks, and other health problems.

Think of it this way: a company might prevent more heart disease by putting out a weekly newsletter, than by getting more people onto cholesterol drugs.

Enjoy the long summer days, while they last!

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