MIGHTIER™

Caregiver Stress, Wellbeing, and Work Impact Study 2023

The Cost of Caring for Your Child

Mothers are trading their careers and mental health to support their children. Mightier changes that.

MIGHTIER™

Family Wellness is Employee Wellness

Where's the line between your child's mental health and your own? When your child struggles, your world shakes, regardless of what you say in a Monday morning check-in or if you show up on time.

There's no emotional boundary between home life and work life. You don't stop caring about your child, worrying about your child, and advocating for your child when the workday starts. You don't stop caring about your profession, career growth and accomplishments when the workday ends.

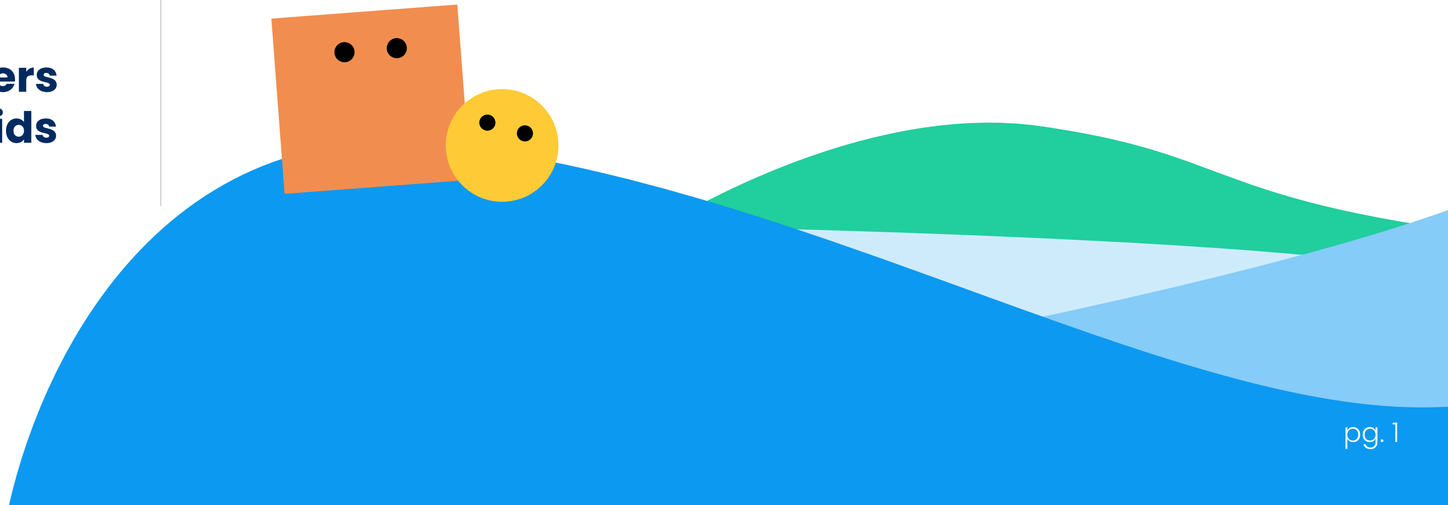
But how exactly does a child's emotional and behavioral wellbeing impact their caregiver? Specifically, how does it impact their mother? What career choices are mothers making, how do they rate their own work performance, and what does their life satisfaction look like when their child is struggling?

How can employers and healthcare providers prioritize whole family wellbeing, helping kids and parents simultaneously?

Mightier helps kids and the adults who love them

Findings from Mightier's Caregiver Stress, Wellbeing, and Work Impact Study outline the significant trade-offs and choices that caregivers (specifically mothers, who are the vast majority of our sample) make to support their children's mental and behavioral health. Additionally, these findings highlight the substantial career and mental health benefits parents experience after just 12 weeks of their children playing Mightier.

Findings from this study demonstrate that when children use Mightier, an at-home, play-based digital therapeutic program, their caregiver's mental health and ability to engage meaningfully at work improves.



MIGHTIER™

Parents' lives and work are hugely impacted by their children's mental health. When kids use Mightier, parents' lives improve too.

Key Findings:

Career Choices
When kids struggle, mothers alter their careers.

Quality of Work
When kids play Mightier, parents are significantly more engaged and less distracted at work.

Days Missed
When kids play Mightier, parents miss fewer days of work.

Whole Family Wellbeing
When kids play Mightier, parents feel better too.

Parent Stress
When children's emotional regulation improves, parents feel less stressed.

MIGHTIER™

The Caregiver Stress, Wellbeing, and Work Impact study was conducted between January and December of 2023.

379 Caregivers

Participants include 379 caregivers who signed their child up for the Mightier program, opted-in to ongoing research, and completed the baseline assessment prior to their child's first Mightier play.

88% Mothers

88% of caregiver participants in this data set are female, making the findings specifically representative of how caring for a child's mental and behavioral health impacts mothers and their careers.

12 Weeks of Mightier for Kids

After children played Mightier for 12 weeks, caregivers completed a round of follow-up assessments.

Prevalence of Need

1 in 5 children ages 3-17 in the US have an assessed mental health need. Mightier supports children with or without a formal diagnosis.

Career Choices

When kids struggle, mothers alter their careers.

69% reported that their child's behavioral or mental health has negatively impacted their career. They've settled for less than they're worth, held themselves back from opportunities, and put their children's growth and advancement above their own.

> *I have had to change my career path from being a supervisor in the division I spent my 12 year career in to being an entry level attorney and not a supervisor in a different division.*
>
> *- Baseline testimonial from a Mightier Mom*

These are not easy choices, but mothers reported making similar career tradeoffs over and over again to support their child's mental and behavioral health needs. That's not good for Moms and it's a substantial loss of talent for employers.

Parents should not have to choose between their child's mental health and their career.

*Findings represent experiences of 299 currently employed caregivers. They do not account for those who have already left their career.

MIGHTIER™

Quality of Work

The emotional boundary between home and work is blurry. Work suffers when kids are struggling.

Whether physical or cognitive presence, motivation, or performing their best, how caregivers show up for work is impacted by their mental health. It's also impacted by their child's.

83% of caregivers reported being ***distracted*** by worry.

73% said their work has been ***interrupted.***

60% stated that the ***quality of their work*** has been impacted by their child's mental or behavioral health.

> *I feel I can't dedicate the level of attention I need to my work and often worry about being fired or let go.*
>
> *- Baseline testimonial from a Mightier Parent*

When kids play Mightier, parents are vastly more engaged at work.

17% **fewer caregivers reported interruptions to their workday**

21% **fewer distracted employees**

24% **fewer caregivers reporting negative impact on work quality**

* Statistically significant changes across all categories, representing decrease in work interruption ($n = 106$, $z = -2.69$, $p = .007$), decrease in work distraction ($n = 106$, $z = -4.12$, $p < .001$), and decreased negative impact on quality of work ($n = 107$, $z = -3.50$, $p < .001$).

MIGHTIER™

Days Missed

Sometimes parents cannot be physically present, either.

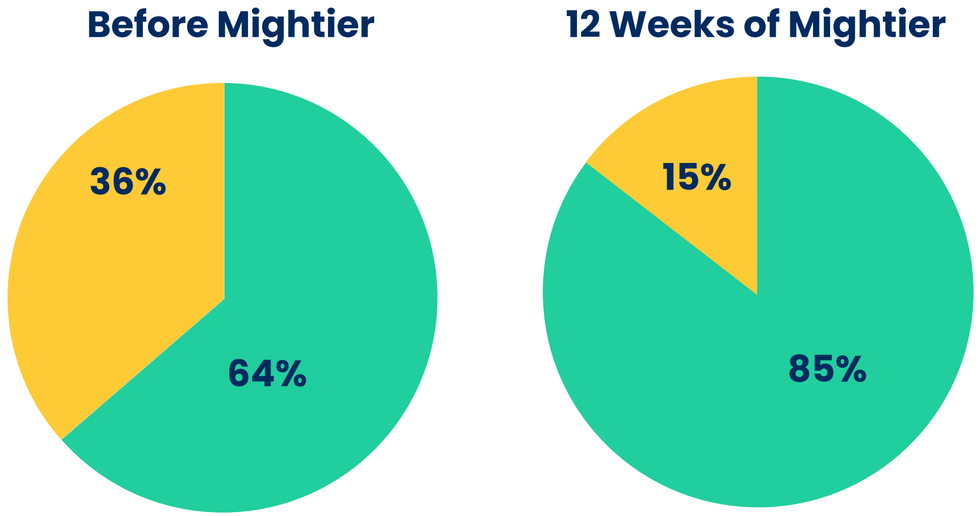
Caring for your child's behavioral health comes with logistics. It means phone calls with the school nurse because anxiety causes a stomach ache. It means leaving early for counseling sessions, because therapists also work 9-5. Sometimes it means calling out altogether because your child was up all night or because getting ready for school turned into a meltdown.

> *There are times I am late to work, or have to call in altogether in order to properly care for my child.*
>
> *- Baseline testimonial from a Mightier Parent*

When we first met these caregivers, the group (n= 96) reported missing a combined **128 days of work within the past month** to support their child's mental health.

When kids play Mightier, parents miss fewer days of work.

After 12 weeks of Mightier the combined number of missed days dropped to 78, meaning that this group of Mightier families missed **50 fewer days of work per month.**



0-1 days missed
in the past month to provide mental health support to their child

2+ days missed
in the past month to provide mental health support to their child

MIGHTIER™

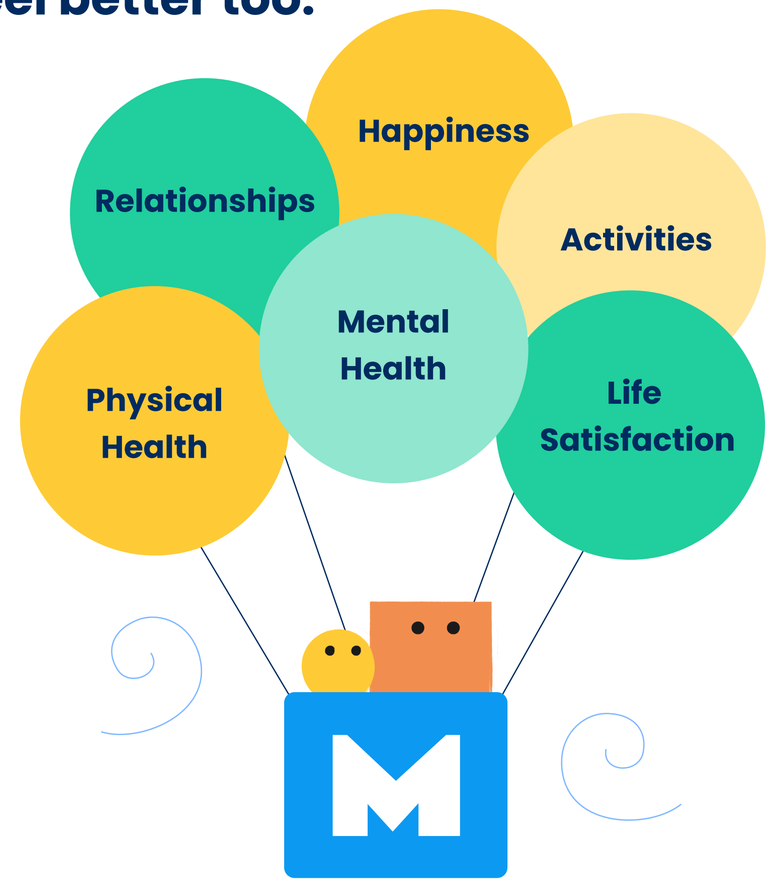
Whole Family Wellbeing

When supporting your child's mental health is your priority, your own wellbeing is not.

Worry is not weightless, and the stress associated with caring for your child's emotional wellbeing comes with real impact. How can you feel truly happy when you know your child is not? How can you prioritize other relationships when the most important person in your life is struggling?

At baseline, **83%** of all caregivers **reported that their engagement in valued activities or relationships had been impacted** by their child's mental or behavioral health. By the 12 week follow up, **that number dropped by 23%.**

When kids play Mightier, parents feel better too.



Caregivers reported a significant increase in elements of their own wellbeing, including physical health, mental health, happiness, life satisfaction, and relationships.

Parent Stress

Parenting a child with big emotions comes with specific challenges.

Parenting comes with joy, pride, and love. It also comes with stress. It comes with worry for your child's future, self-doubt around your own choices, frustration around behavior management, and guilt when you overreact.

Parenting a child who has "big" emotions and even bigger reactions comes with another type of stress. It comes with the frustration of therapeutic approaches that still leave your child unable to use coping skills in the moment. It comes with endless attempts to find and access tools that will truly help. And it comes with your own feelings of overwhelm because emotional regulation is not a skill that the mental healthcare system appropriately addresses.

Caregivers are, without question, the biggest advocates for their kids. They're just stuck advocating within a system that is not fully built for their needs.

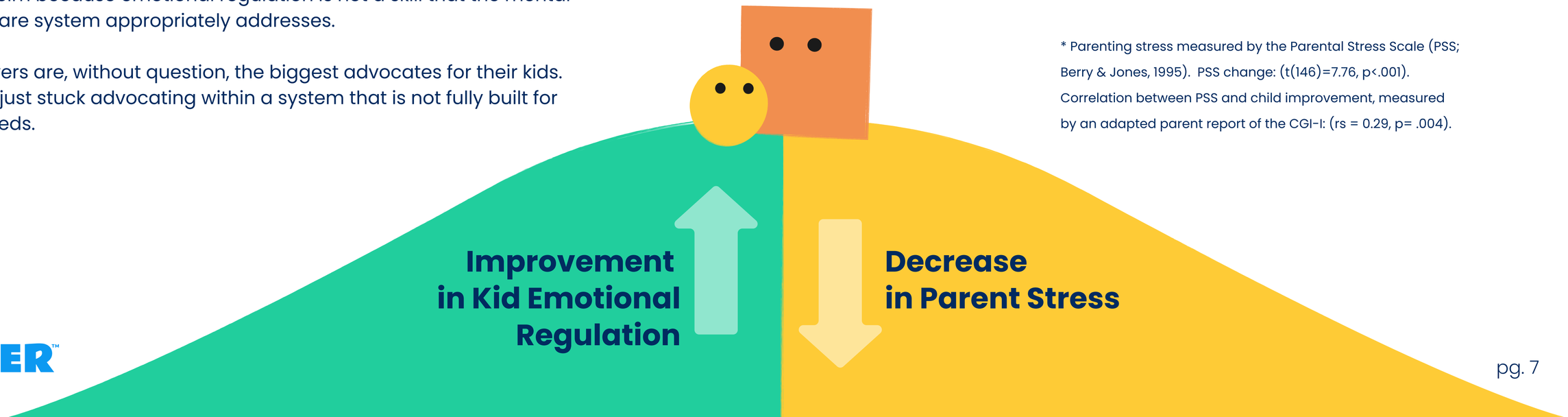
When children's emotional regulation improves, parents feel less stressed.

Emotional regulation is a foundational piece of mental health and wellbeing, and Mightier is clinically validated to help children build this skill through play.

In this study **83% of parents reported that their child's emotional regulation improved** after using Mightier. In addition, caregivers reported **significantly less parenting stress**.*

These changes were correlated*, meaning that the more a child improved with playing Mightier, the less stressed their parent felt.

* Parenting stress measured by the Parental Stress Scale (PSS; Berry & Jones, 1995). PSS change: ($t(146)=7.76$, $p<.001$). Correlation between PSS and child improvement, measured by an adapted parent report of the CGI-I: ($r_s = 0.29$, $p= .004$).



MIGHTIER™

Built for Kids, Built for home

When your child struggles, your world shakes. Your mental health suffers, your priorities change, you alter your career, and you would make these same tradeoffs and choices over and over again in order to support your child's needs.

There's another piece to this story - a piece about access to care and the incredible complications caregivers face in trying to find effective, affordable, and accessible mental health treatment options for their children. **The access crisis is not just about lack of providers**. It's about navigating a complicated system, the stress that comes with missing work or school for appointments, treatment options that aren't truly effective, and therapeutic models that are not engaging, enjoyable, or built for kids.

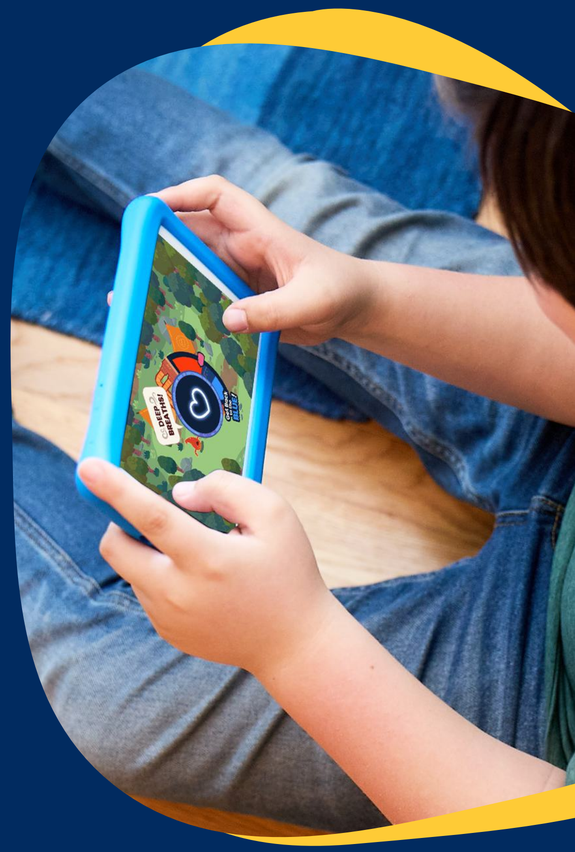
Mightier is a digitally accessible, at-home, play-based therapeutic program designed for kids, and for the adults who love them. Kids wear a heart rate monitor as they play, letting them explore their emotions and practice coping skills in real time. Born out of Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Mightier is clinically validated to help children build stronger emotional regulation skills through play.

Interested in a data deep dive?

Find our white paper here.

To learn more about Mightier and how to bring Mightier's family programming to your employees or members,

Get in touch with us here.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the Mightier families who participated in this study. Thank you for sharing your stories and opening your homes. At Mightier we believe that if the system wants to help a neurodiverse group of kids, then the system needs to be built for a neurodiverse group of kids. For us, understanding your family's experience, your emotional needs, and Mightier's true and honest impact on your family's life is crucial to our ability to develop an effective and engaging product.