

FACES

Cassie Sobelton

Cassie Sobelton hopes to help give employees access to a healthier workplace with her second book, *The Employee Wellbeing Handbook*.

Her company, SynBella, has been consulting with benefit brokers and employees for the last 15 years to put a better program in practice, but she wanted to go bigger and reach more people.

"We find the majority of American businesses don't really know what they're doing, they don't know how to create a healthy culture, but instead they are throwing spaghetti at the wall trying to figure it out," said the Birmingham resident.

"The book is essentially a guideline to everything we've learned in our organization," she continued.

Sobelton's desire a bigger audience wasn't the only reason she decided to publish this book now. She said that with millennials becoming more prominent in the workplace, it's causing a shift in how employers go about getting and keeping employees. Millennials aren't content with the status quo.

But it isn't just millennials Sobelton wants to help. She wants to benefit every generation. That starts with employers really looking at their staff and what generation they fit into, and figuring out how to help with specific concerns.

For example, if a company has millennials, she suggests starting a program to help pay back student debt. If there's lots of older people, help them figure out how to save for retirement.

"I hope that people understand that this isn't something that's insurmountable," said Sobelton, who has worked in health care, insurance, and as a benefits broker.

The book – set for release in September – focuses on the workplace, as Sobelton's first book, *Back to Balance*, focused on personal wellbeing, including her own.

Sobelton was working in the corporate world when she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. After the diagnosis, and a very major surgery, she was put on a lot of different pharmaceutical pills. She asked if instead she could correct her disease through diet or lifestyle but was told she needed to stay on medicine.

Cue her going to school to become a nutritionist, health coach, yoga instructor, and diving in to learn more about stress reduction techniques.

"What I found through that process was I was able to move myself slowly off of all my meds," she said. "It's been about 15 years and I've had no problems."

Others asked her advice, and soon Sobelton was having this type of conversation multiple times a week. That's when she decided to write a book about it. She does emphasize that her road map to wellness might not be the same for everyone else – and that's ok.

Another important factor is knowing up front it's going to take some time to build healthier, more holistic practices. She said she tried a lot of different things that didn't work before landing on what did, like her daily yoga practice and creating her surroundings to be successful.

Being able to admit her faults and that she isn't perfect isn't something all nutritionists or health coaches are willing to do. Sobelton isn't typical though.

"Eighty percent of the time I do what's right, I eat perfectly, I work my body perfectly, I do stress-reduction," she said. "But 20 percent of the time I goof off, and I think we all need to be able to do that and expose that to others so that we feel more relatable to them."

Turns out some people do actually practice what they preach.

Story: Dana Casadei

Photo: Laurie Tennent

