Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Evolving Workplace

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LifeWorks
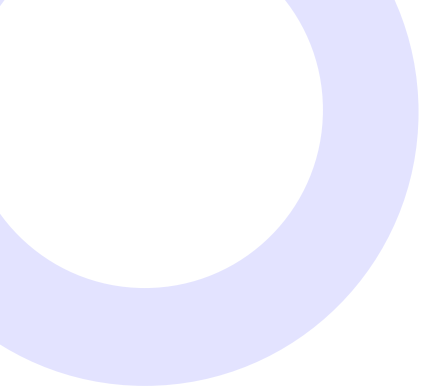
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Today's discussion

- Understanding **mental health**
- Strain among **high performers**
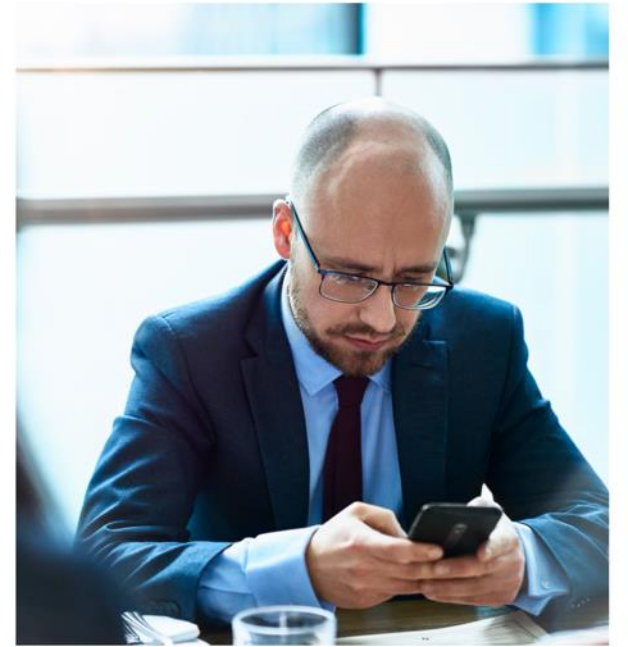- Building resilience **for yourself**
- Supporting **others**

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A poll of 15,000 employees
Monthly in the US and Canada

The pandemic triggered several things that put strain on the human mind

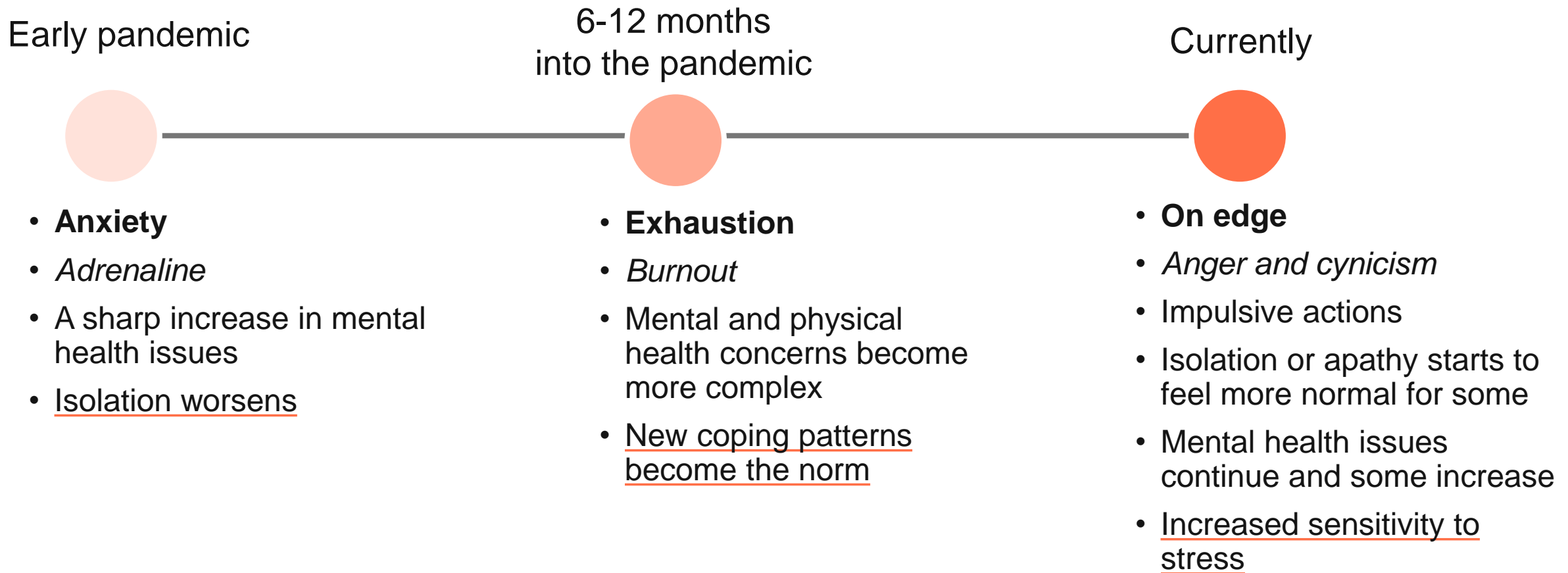**Multiple mental health risk factors**

- Massive **change**

- Loss of sense of **control**

- **Uncertainty**

- Prolonged **isolation**

- Unfamiliar **risks**

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The decline in mental health of working Canadians was significant and remains well below pre-pandemic levels

Pre-pandemic mental health (74.8)

Distressed 0-49	
Strained 50-79	
Optimal 80-100	

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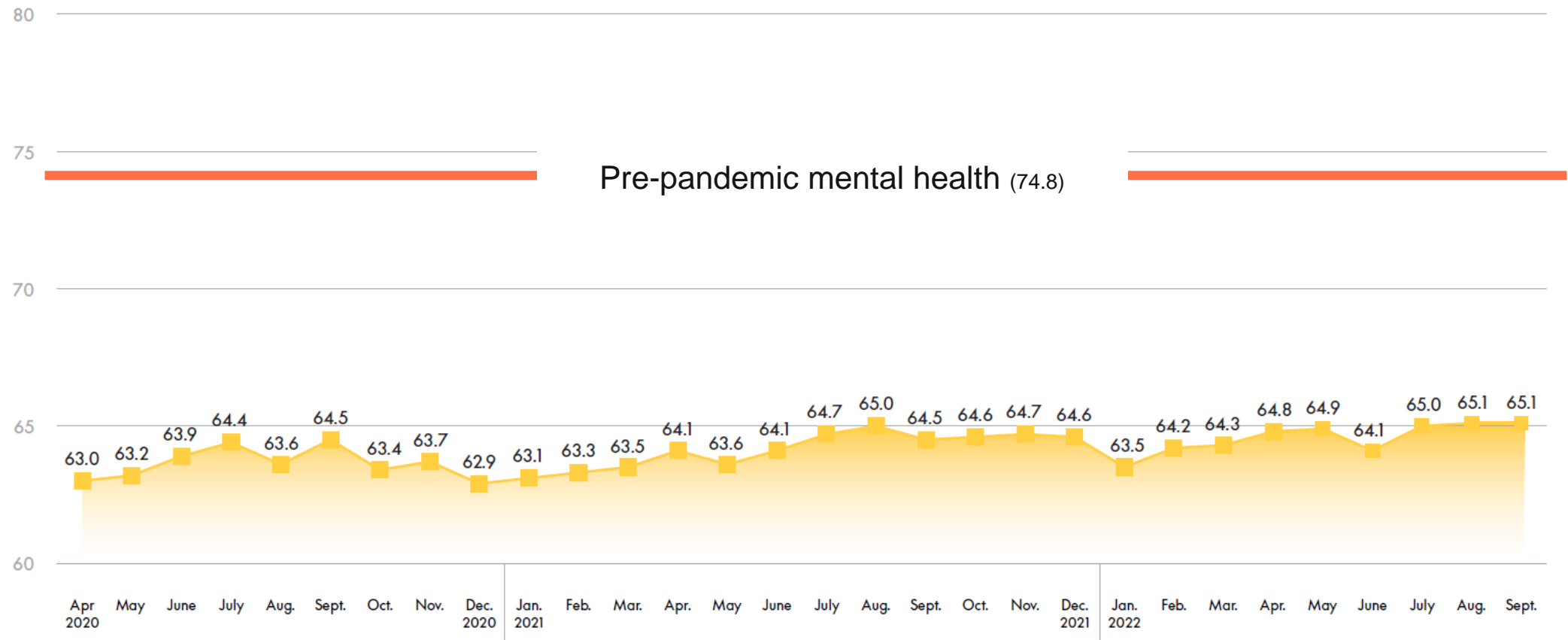
Shifts in our mental health have been evident since early pandemdic

Early pandemic

6-12 months into the pandemic

Currently

- **Anxiety**
- *Adrenaline*
- A sharp increase in mental health issues
- Isolation worsens

- **Exhaustion**
- *Burnout*
- Mental and physical health concerns become more complex
- New coping patterns become the norm

- **On edge**
- *Anger and cynicism*
- Impulsive actions
- Isolation or apathy starts to feel more normal for some
- Mental health issues continue and some increase
- Increased sensitivity to stress

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Currently..

34%

High-risk **mental health**
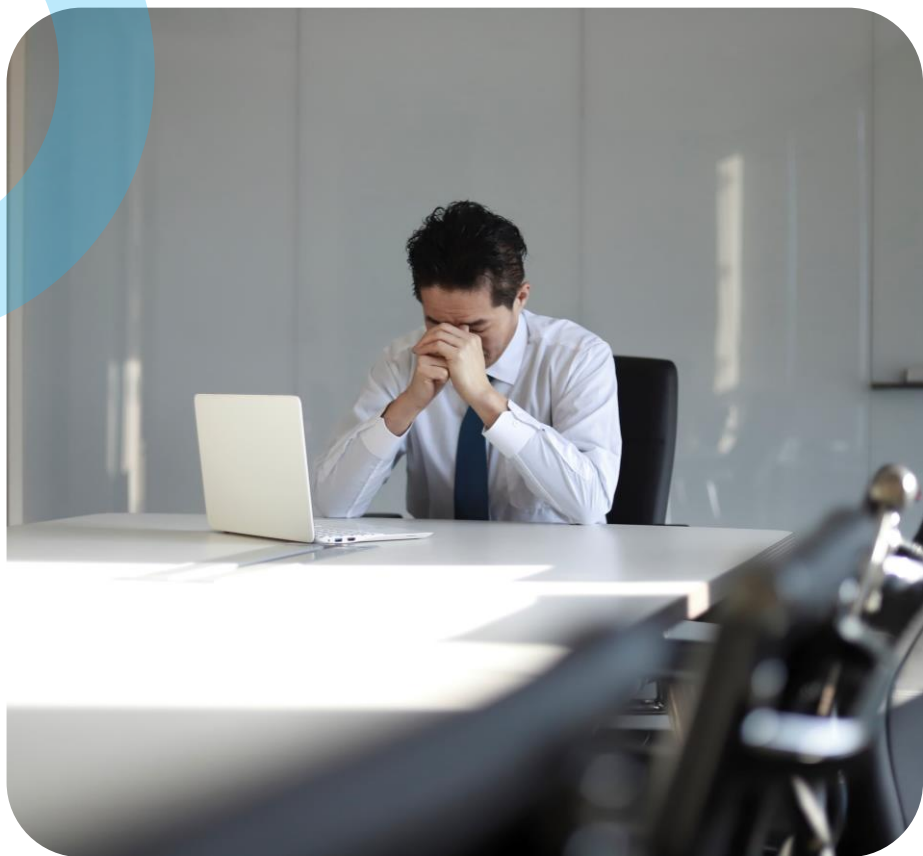
of the working population
was **12%** in 2019

8%

High-risk **drinking**

of the working population
was **2%** in 2019

The group with the
biggest increase in
risky drinking between
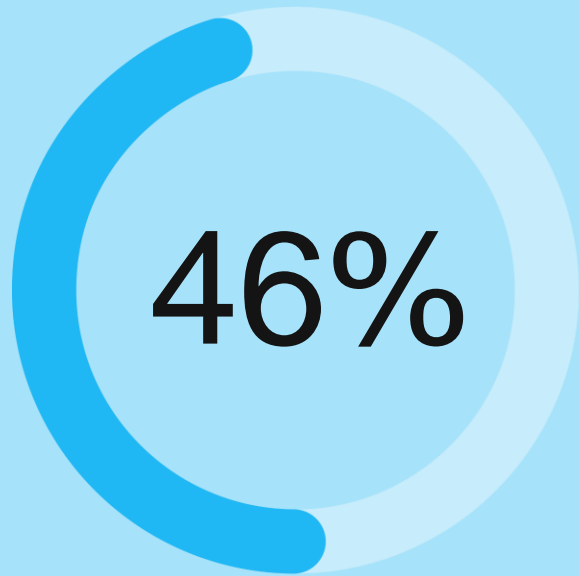50 and 59 years

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>50% of workers have experienced at least one **major sign of burnout** over past two years

which reduces productivity and increases the likelihood of illness and turnover

The long-term strain of the pandemic has <u>increased sensitivity to stress</u>

46%

of workers more sensitive to stress in 2022 compared to 2019

Prolonged strain <u>over-activates the "fight or flight" response</u>, and dampens empathy and emotional control

This means more:

- Conflict
- Cynicism
- Anger
- Impulsiveness or apathy
- Mental health vulnerability

Several groups have unique risks

Parents more likely to be in **crisis** and almost **4 times** more likely to overuse prescription medication

Managers and senior leaders have shown **particularly high strain** and greater fear of stigma

The younger the employee, the greater the **sense of isolation**

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4 in 5 supervisors have dealt with a specific mental issue with at least one employee and <u>most do not know what to do</u>

25% Yes, and I have provided support or reminded people how to get support

30% Yes, I have seen concerning behaviour changes, but <u>I am not sure what to do</u>

25% Yes, an employee(s) have brought it up with me, but <u>I am not sure what to do</u>

20% No, I have not had any mental health issues come up with an employee

The strain of senior leaders has been unrecognized
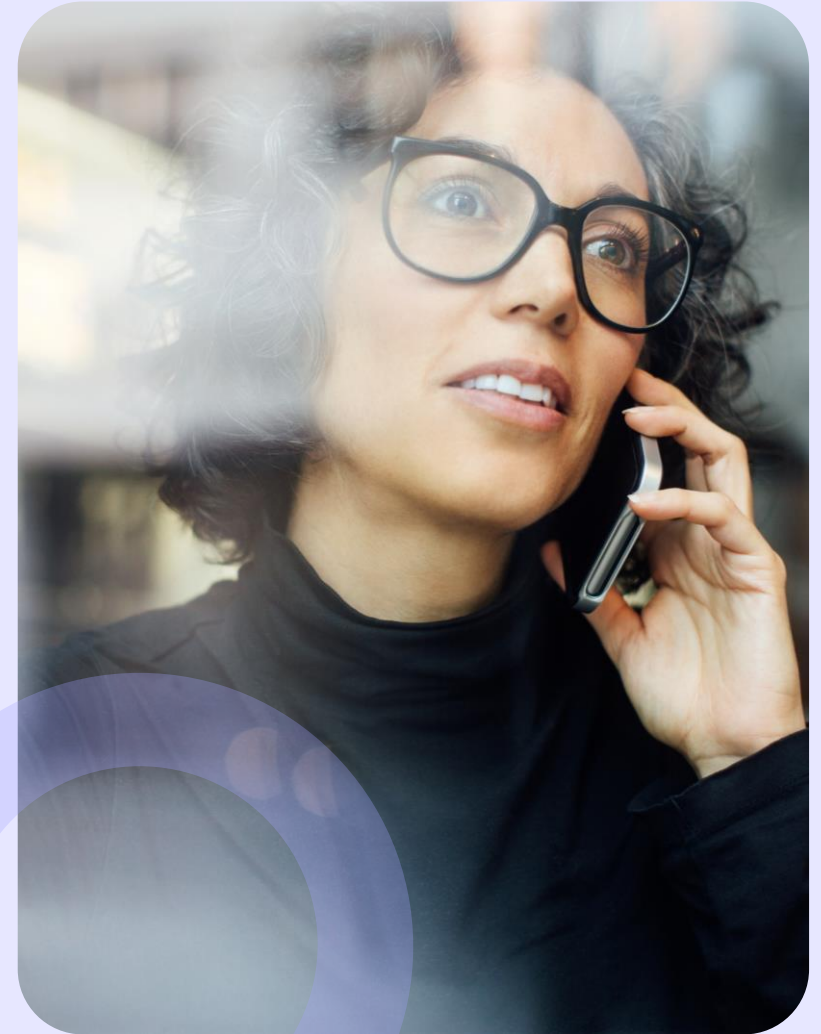
59% Are unable to relax or pause activity

49% Have difficulties sleeping

43% Report increased irritability

38% Have reduced energy or emotional changes

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Excessive strain and even clinical depression in <u>high performers,</u> may be hard to detect

- Increased **perfectionism**
- Overly **driven**
- Increased need for **methodical** approaches / inflexible
- Relentlessly **critical**
- May unknowingly **create tension for others**

- Overreliance on **temporary coping strategies** (e.g. alcohol, gambling)
- Irritability; **quick to anger**
- Low level **constant sadness**
- Increased **isolation**
- Need for **constant activity**
- **May continue to overachieve work**

The workplace culture makes a significant difference for senior leaders

Helpful

Peers
Mutual support in work and a sense of connection with peers

Harmful

Stigma
Leaders have greater fear of stigma than others, which prevents seeking help

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Building personal resilience

There are two main burnout risks

Lack of ongoing recovery

Excessive mental strain

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There are two main burnout risks

Rest ≠ Recovery

Lack of ongoing recovery

Rest is important but recovery from stress is not passive.

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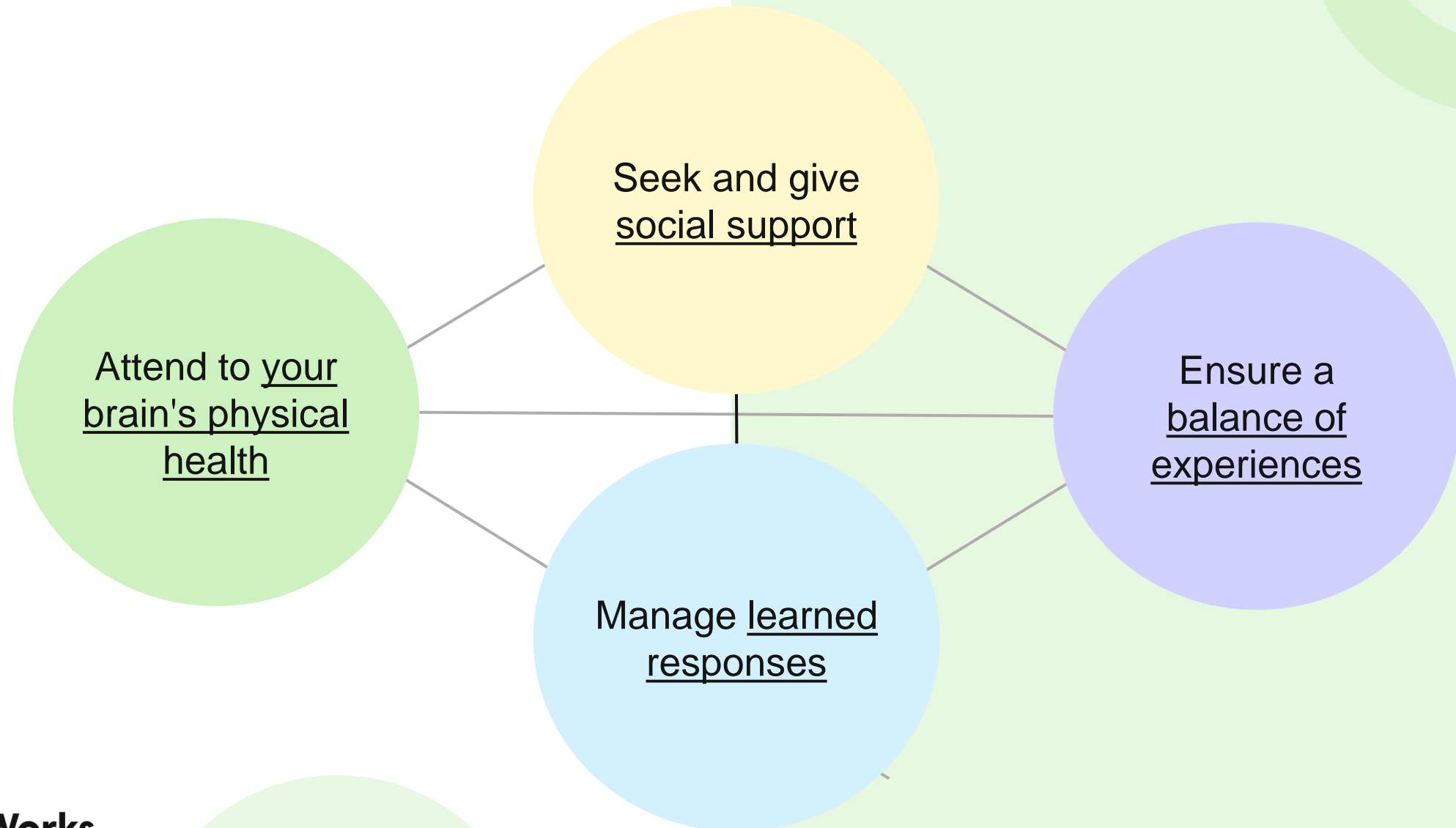
There are two main burnout risks

Resilience is not about pushing through strain; it is the **capacity to recover from strain**.

Grit ≠ Resilience

Excessive mental strain

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There are four areas to invest in to build resilience

Seek and give
social support

Attend to your
brain's physical
health

Ensure a
balance of
experiences

Manage learned
responses

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Supporting **others**

The hybrid world has its own stress

The top ask in flexibility is the ability to step away when needed

Almost half of employees prefer some form of in-person mental health support

1 in 5 women say they've felt ignored or overlooked by colleagues during video calls* vs 15% of men

* The Impact of Covid-19 on Workplace Inclusion, Catalyst, June 2020

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Relationship and belonging are strained

10% fewer employees feel a sense of belonging at work

Work relationships have worsened between employees, and employees/ managers

Compared to 2019

Those who do not have a sense of belonging are over 30 working days less productive (per annum)

Employers' preference for the type of return is unrelated to employees intent to resign

Employers' preference for return

Intent to resign

Where I work **did not change during the pandemic**	**29%**
My employer wants a return to working **the way it was before the pandemic**	**35%**
I believe that my employer will be ok with/want me to **continue to work from home**	**34%**
I believe that my employer will want us to **work at the worksite at least part of the time (hybrid)**	**34%**
I believe my employer will allow me the **flexibility to choose my work location**	**32%**

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Employees' sense of belonging at work is very strongly correlated with their intent to resign

Employees' sense of Belonging

Intent to resign

Very strong sense of belonging	**16%**
A sense of belonging	**29%**
Unsure	**53%**
Little sense of belonging	**58%**
No sense of belonging	**67%**

For underlined older workers and men in senior roles, intent to resign is more likely driven by lack of appreciation.

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Recognition is the top driver of belonging for workers

The need for recognition increases during times of strain

When <u>someone else</u> is in distress, step-in, listen and show empathy

- Be human

- Show care

- Be specific about what you see

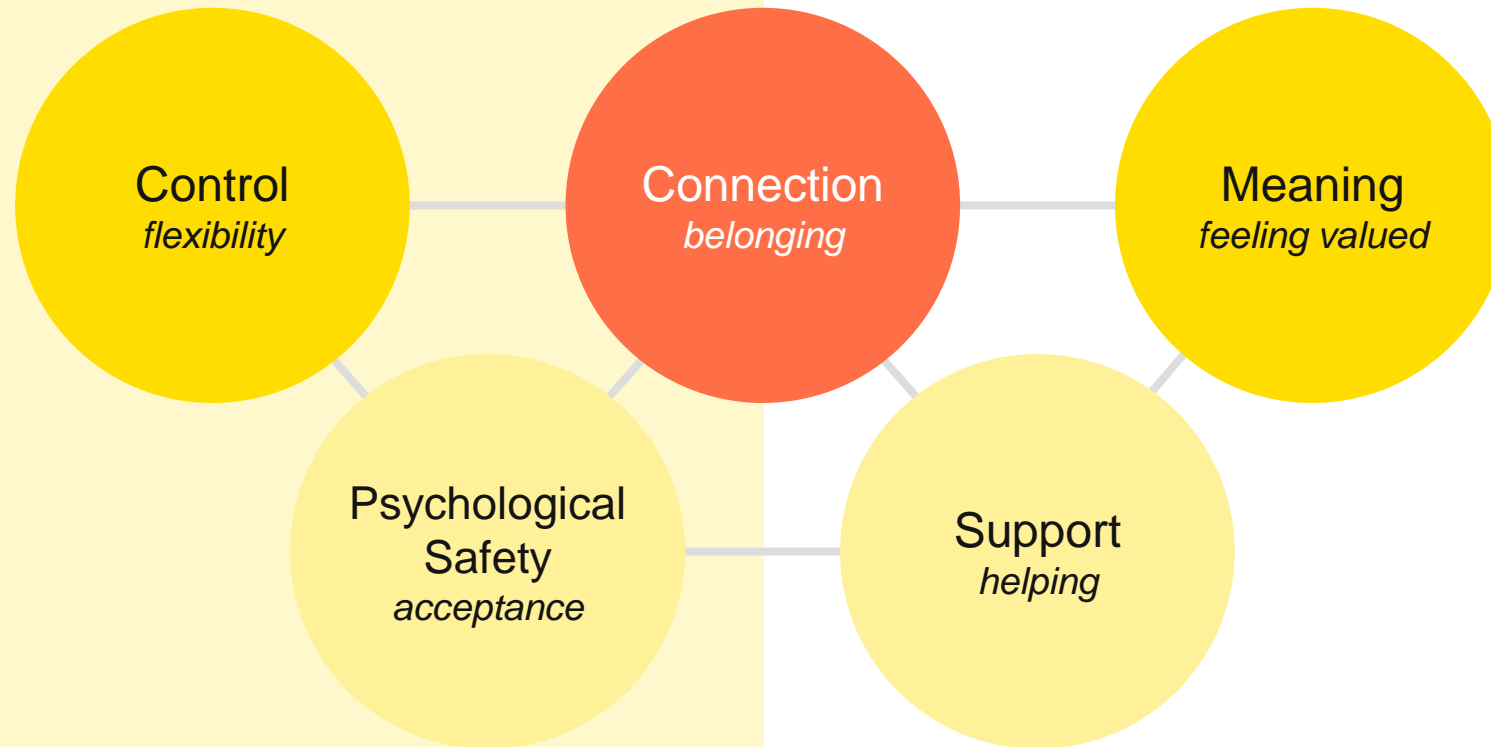- Resist quick fixes

- Support the next step

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What employers do makes a difference

Those with employers who support mental health **have better mental health**

- **7 points higher** than average
- **15 points higher** than those whose employers give no support

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We can build a mentally healthy environment by supporting 5 key needs

Your thoughts?

Can you think of <u>one thing</u> you can do?

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