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# Leading Resilience

IMD Alumni - MBA 1988

Professor Alyson Meister

Sept 2023

**IMD** / Real learning  
Real impact



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# The Big Picture



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# Myth...or fact?

Workplace stress levels  
have slowly declined since  
the pandemic ended.

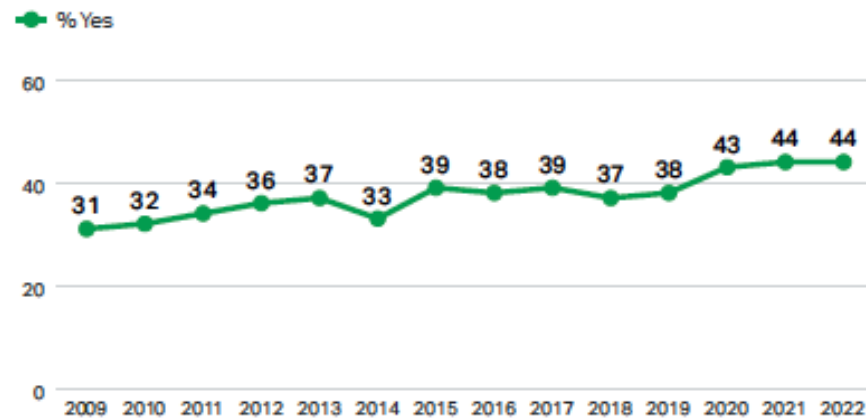


**MYTH**

They're remaining at an all-time high with 44% of employees feeling stress "a lot of the day"

### Daily Stress

Did you experience the following feelings during A LOT OF THE DAY yesterday? How about stress?



Source:  
Gallup State of the Workplace 2022

© Alyson Meister, IMD



Photo by Nataliya Vaitkevich

# Myth...or fact?

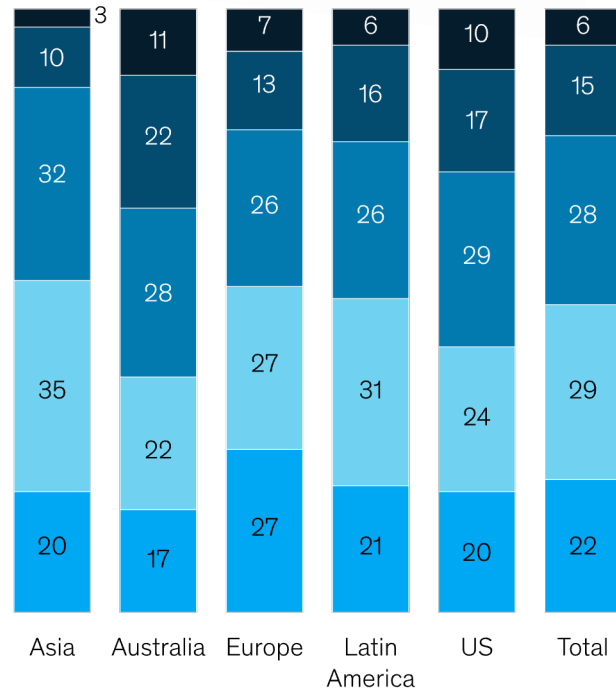
50% of employees felt “at least somewhat burned out” last year



# FACT

Level of burnout felt by employees, % survey participants

- Very-high degree
- High degree
- Somewhat
- Low degree
- Very-low degree



**49%**  
of respondents say they are feeling at least somewhat burned out



<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/what-employees-are-saying-about-the-future-of-remote-work>

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97% of employees check their smartphones phones when on a **break** (e.g., even while in the washroom)



**FACT**





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# Myth...or fact?

Every year, we lose 5 billion workdays due to mental health issues globally



**MYTH**

World Health Organization:  
Every year, **we lose 12 billion  
workdays to depression and  
anxiety alone globally.**

**This costs the economy US\$1 trillion  
in lost productivity.**



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# Myth...or fact?

Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst 25-35 year olds





**FACT**

In the USA it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause, and globally it's the 4<sup>th</sup>  
Gen Z is the hardest hit by stress; 90% experienced elevated psychological symptoms of stress in the past year. Younger women are faring particularly bad this year.



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# Myth or Fact

50% of workers say that how employers support mental health will be an important consideration for them in future work



# MYTH

It's 80%

% OF WORKERS WHO AGREE THAT HOW EMPLOYERS SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH WILL BE AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR THEM WHEN THEY LOOK FOR FUTURE WORK:

81% agree, including 30% who strongly agree

81%

30%

who strongly agree

© 2022 American Psychological Association

(Note that nearly 50% of Gen Z and Millennials had quit a job due to stress and 'burnout' (Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey)



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# Myth...or fact?

The C-suite tends to  
*overestimate* the mental  
health of their workforce



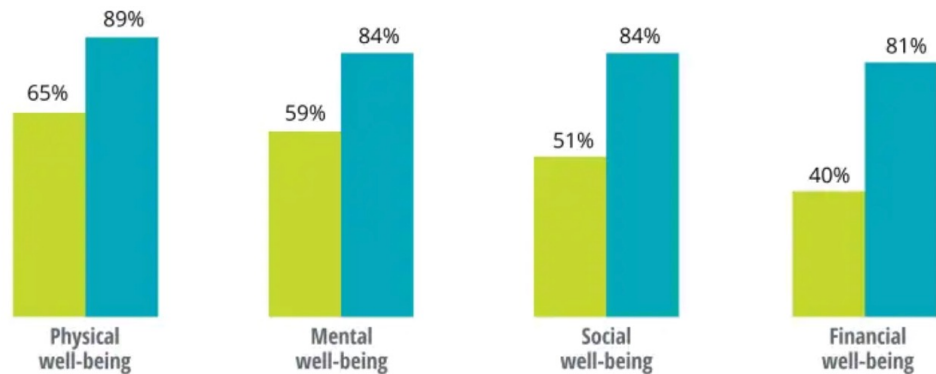
**FACT**

FIGURE 1

**The C-suite significantly underestimates how much employees are struggling with their well-being**

Percentage who selected "excellent" or "good"

■ Employees' self-reported well-being ■ The C-suite's assessment of employee well-being



Source: Deloitte analytics.

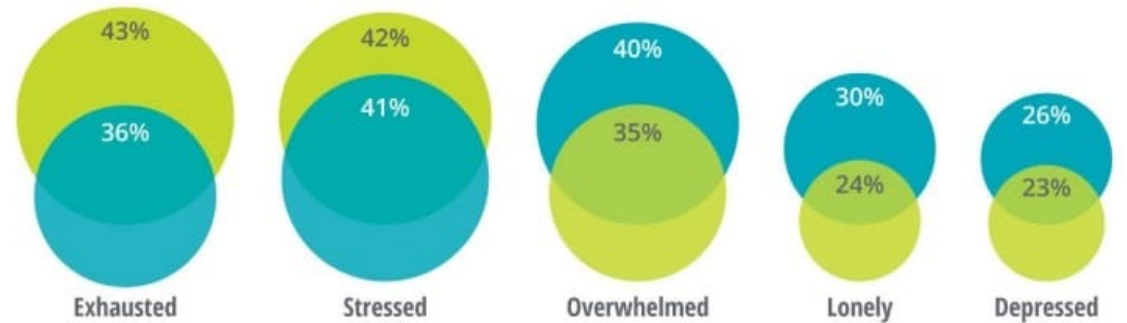
Deloitte Insights | [deloitte.com/insight](https://deloitte.com/insight)

FIGURE 2

**Around one out of three employees and executives are constantly struggling with fatigue and poor mental health**

Percentage who said they "always" or "often" feel this way

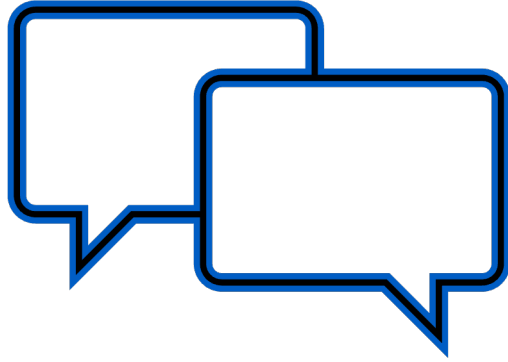
■ Employees ■ C-suite



Source: Deloitte analytics.

Deloitte Insights | [deloitte.com/insights](https://deloitte.com/insights)





## Discuss:

*Why* is this happening?! And why now?  
What do you see/notice from your perspectives?

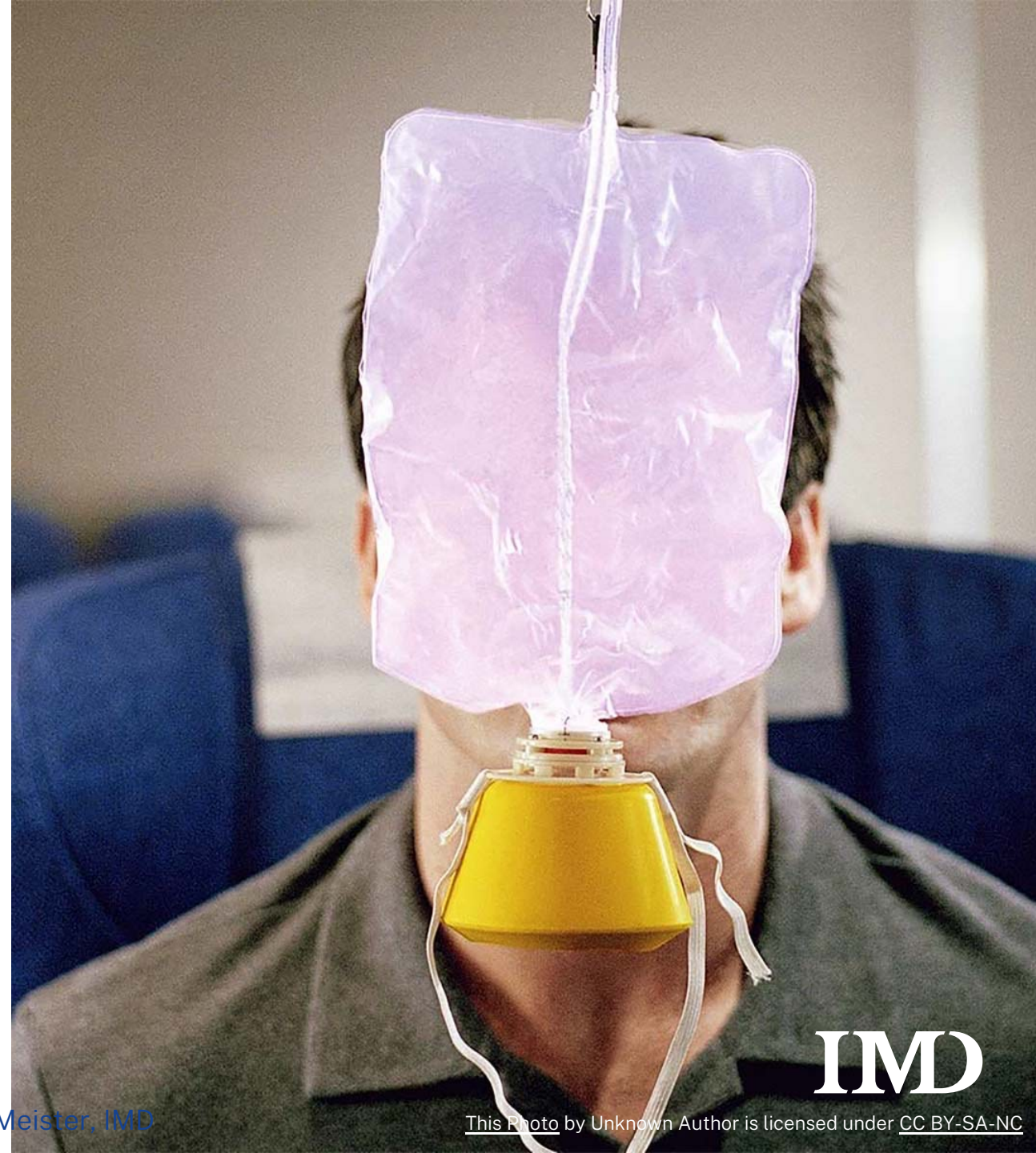
# The new normal



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# Leaders must take a whole-person approach

- Become hyper self-aware: of their own (and others') physical, emotional, and psychological states
- Practice strategies to help themselves (and others) manage their state and build resilience
- Develop and role model sustainable working practices
- Cultivate organizations cultures that support employees to perform *and* thrive



# Resilience

- Resilience is the capacity to confront, recover - and even grow - from adversity and uncertainty.
- Resilient leaders learn to sustain their energy level under pressure, to cope with disruptive changes and adapt. They overcome major difficulties without engaging in dysfunctional behavior or harming others.
- Resilience is related to enhanced life and health outcomes: lower stress, anxiety, PTSD, cardiovascular disease.
- Resilience improves performance under pressure and adversity. It is key to high performance leadership.

**Resilient leadership:  
Navigating the pressures of  
modern working life**

By [George Kohlrieser](#), Anouk Lavoie Orlick, Michelle Perrinjaquet and Rosa Luisa Rossi



# Resilience

- Its not a trait
- It is dynamic
- It does not differ by gender
- Is forged in the flames; built with adversity and under pressure
- It can be learned!

## *Cool Federer Image Was Forged in a Hot Head*

# **Roger Federer Explains How He Keeps His Cool On The Court And When He Stopped Being Angry**

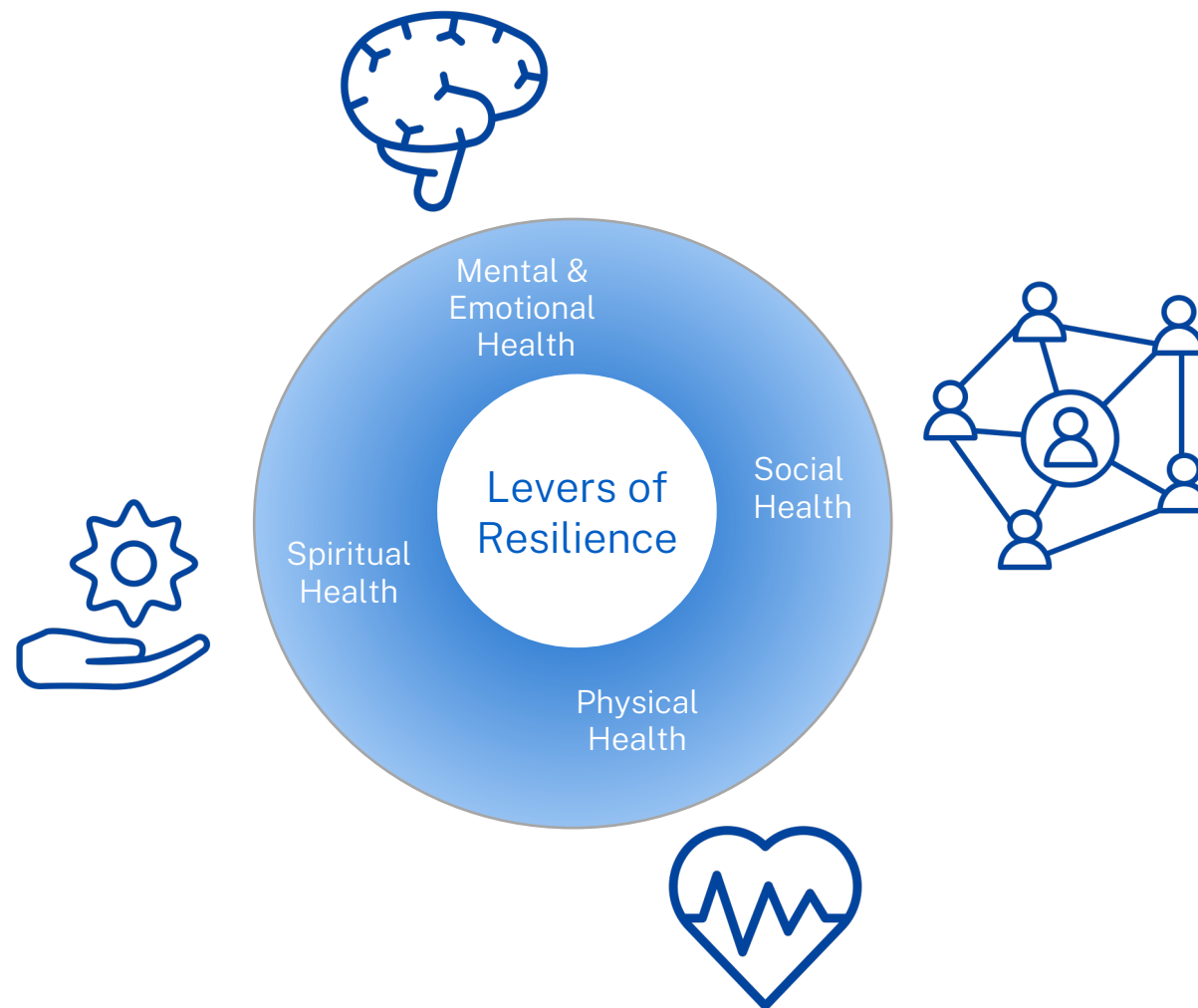
by Tom Gainey | September 8th, 2015, 12:28 pm

He would cry when things went poorly, and send his racket skidding across the court after an error. On occasion he would whine at bad calls, slam balls in anger and argue with his father.

“It’s enough. I can’t stand it watching me throwing rackets and embarrass myself in front of thousands of people in a live stadium, so I tried to change, had quite a transformation from a screaming, racket throwing, swearing kind of brat on the tennis court to this calm guy today. It’s very important to sort of move on. And I think also losses make you stronger. It’s important to learn out of those mistakes and then you become better and the better player, you work harder. A light goes up in your head, you go like, ‘You know what? I think I understand now what I need to improve.’”



# Resilience: Starts with the individual



# Physical Health





# Physical Health



- Recover your energy by balancing both your sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems
- Sleep is the single most effective way to recover from stress and shift your mindset
  - We need 7-9 hours of sleep – yet studies show over 65% of us get less. Human beings are the only species that deliberately deprive themselves of sleep for no apparent gain (Matt Walker)
- Nutritional balance and proper nutrients
- Exercise and body health & fitness
- Resist pushing through exhaustion: it won't help in the long run
- Note: this physiological intelligence (the mind body connection) can be learned through practice

# Mental & Emotional Health



© Alyson Meister, IMD

# Mental & Emotional Health



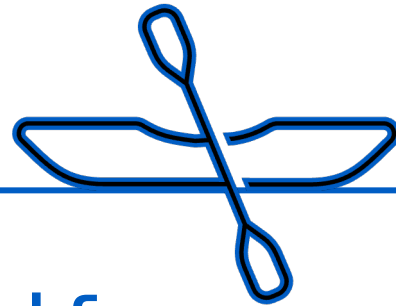
- Your emotions shape your entire life's experience: its important to first recognize your emotions and mental state (and that of others)
- Develop and employ tools and strategies to manage your energy and recovery (mindfulness, energy management, etc.)
- Limit negative and boost positive thoughts and emotions: doom scrolling, rumination, negative mindset
- Develop optimism and practice gratitude (even 3 mins a day scientifically shows to help!)

# Managing your State



# Managing your State





Ask yourself, are you above or below the water line, right now?

# Your state & mindset



- Open, curious
- Accountable, personal responsibility
- Committed to learning, understanding
- Control
- Choice
- Growth mindset
- Empathy & perspective taking



- Responsive
- Joy, Excitement
- Confidence
- Positivity
- Optimism
- Concern

*Above the line*



- Tired, fatigued, exhausted
- Closed, defensive, reactive
- Fixed mindset
- Victim, blaming others or 'the context'
- Judgement
- Committed to being right
- Oriented in the past & past wrongs
- Dehumanizing the 'other' side



- Frustration, anger, rage
- Negative mood; grumpy
- Helpless, Resigned
- Anxiety
- Overwhelmed
- Rumination
- Panic

*Below the line*

# Reflect on the following:

01

## Your own stress-signature

What happens when you go below the line – what are the signs?



02

## State management

What do you do bring yourself (and others) back up? To change your state when you're there?



# Managing State

## From awareness to action

**Recognize building signs:** Know your ‘stress signature’ & others’ ; what to do when you notice it?



### **Head (cognition): what am I thinking?**

- Fogginess? Patterns? Ruminating? Harsh judgement
- Trouble making decisions (even easy ones)
- Loss of motivation



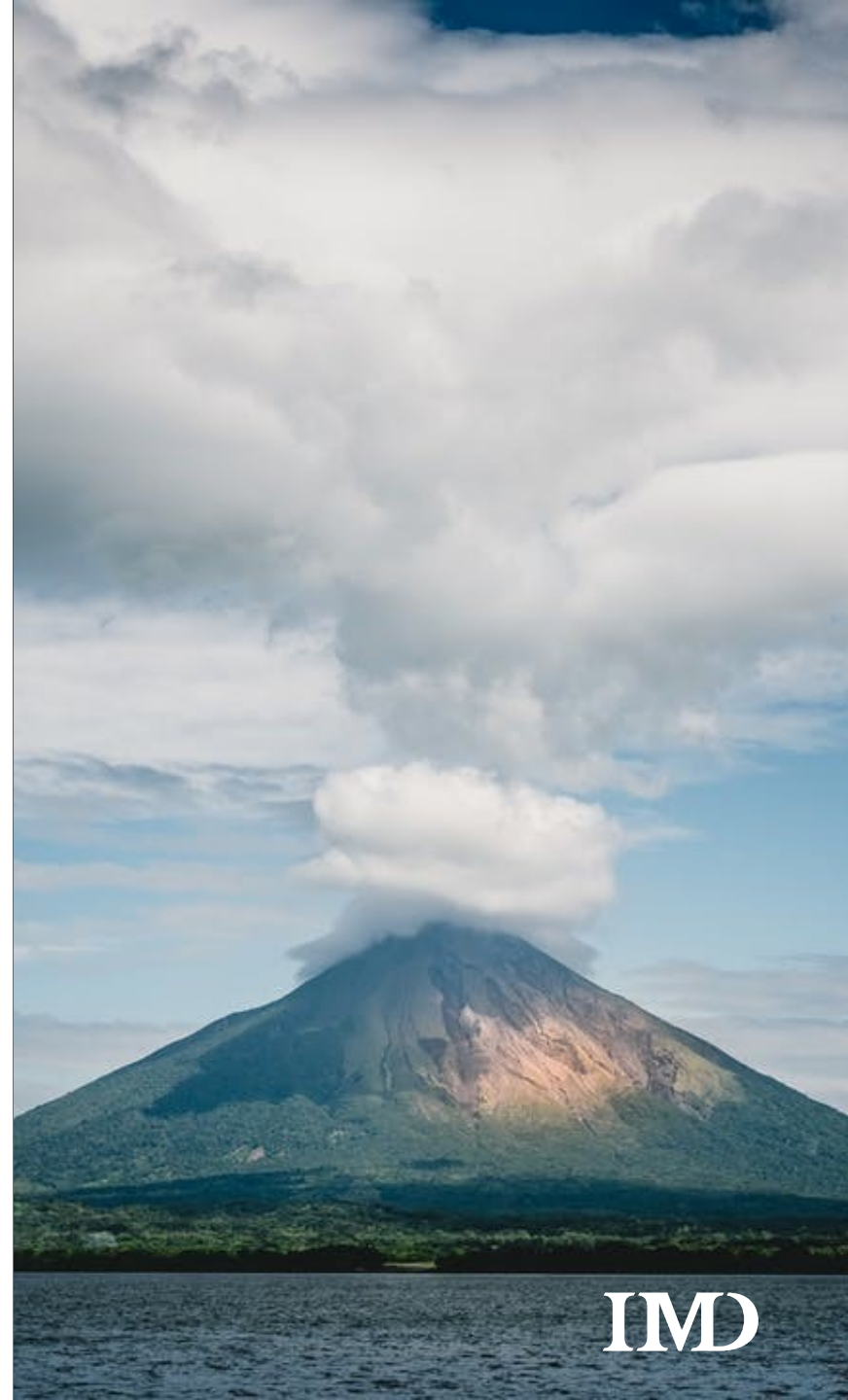
### **Heart (emotions): what am I feeling?**

- Mood fluctuations, irritableness, cynicism, extreme emotions
- No discernable emotion, or over-excitement



### **Hands (body & behavior): what am I doing?**

- Change in behavior, silence & withdrawal, weight fluctuation, poor coping mechanisms (e.g., drinking, smoking, less exercise), fatigue, change in sleep patterns



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# Managing State

## From awareness to action

- Regulate your body's stress response: breathing (!) is most effective (think physiological sigh)
- Mindfulness: Non-judgmental awareness, acceptance and self-compassion
- Distract yourself: Get outside your head - play with kids, pets, paint, draw, cook, build, music, take a “time out”
- Disconnect: from your phone and technology
- Social connection: ask for help, listen, let yourself be heard in a trusting relationship
- Cultivate meaning: Reframe, reorient toward purpose, develop empathy, the bigger picture
- Change your place: places can be triggering, and change of context can work



# Social Health



# Social Health



- Strong, positive and trusting relationships: both inside and outside of the workplace
- Constructively tackling conflict and tensions with important others
- Develop relationships in the ‘real world’ and limit harm caused by virtual social interactions and social comparison
- Having work ‘best friends’ (even at the CEO and Board member level where it can feel isolated)

## There’s an epidemic of loneliness: will AI make it worse?

By Tony Case



COVER STORY

## The science of why friendships keep us healthy

American culture prioritizes romance, but psychological science is exploring the human need for platonic relationships and the specific ways in which they bolster well-being

By Zara Abrams Date created: June 1, 2023 12 min read

Vol. 54 No. 4

Print version: pages 42

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## The Social Dilemma: Social Media and Your Mental Health

‘Like’ it or not, using social media can cause anxiety, depression, and other health challenges. How can you change your habits?

The logo for IMD (International Management Development Institute), consisting of the letters 'IMD' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

# Spiritual Health

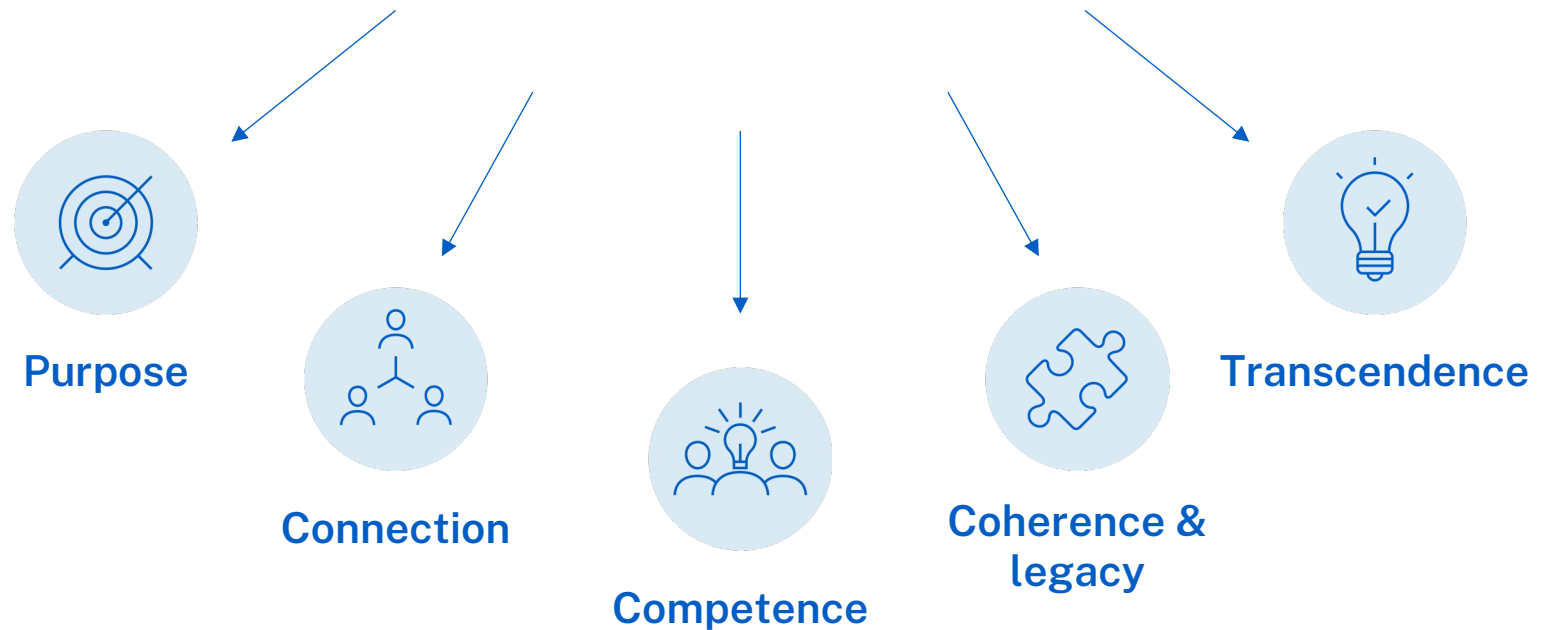


# Spiritual Health



*finding meaning and  
purpose in your life*

Meaning is the knowledge that whatever we are doing truly matters. To mean something is to have value and significance.



# Example: Japan

Blue Zones:  
living with Ikigai  
well into their 90s



| TRAVEL |

**This island unlocked the secret to long life—and knows how to get through tough times**

Residents of Okinawa are some of the world's healthiest and happiest. Strong social networks and good food may be why.

# Resilience: Starts with the Individual

## Mental & Emotional Health

- Recognize your emotions (in yourself and others) and change your state
- Use tools and strategies to manage emotions and recover (mindfulness, etc)
- Limiting negative and boosting positive thoughts and emotion
- Developed optimism and gratitude

**My Self Rating (0-5):**

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## Spiritual Health

- Purpose and Meaning: Connecting to something more, making a difference, feeling useful, growing as a human
- Finding meaning in adversity
- Feeling a sense of purpose and mastery in your life: being good at something and proud of it

**My Self Rating (0-5):**

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## Social Health

- Do you have strong, trusting relationships: a 'work best friend' or one outside of work?
- Can you speak to others – your team or your leader about your feelings?
- Can you constructively manage conflict?
- Can you create shared meaning with others involved?

**My Self Rating (0-5):**

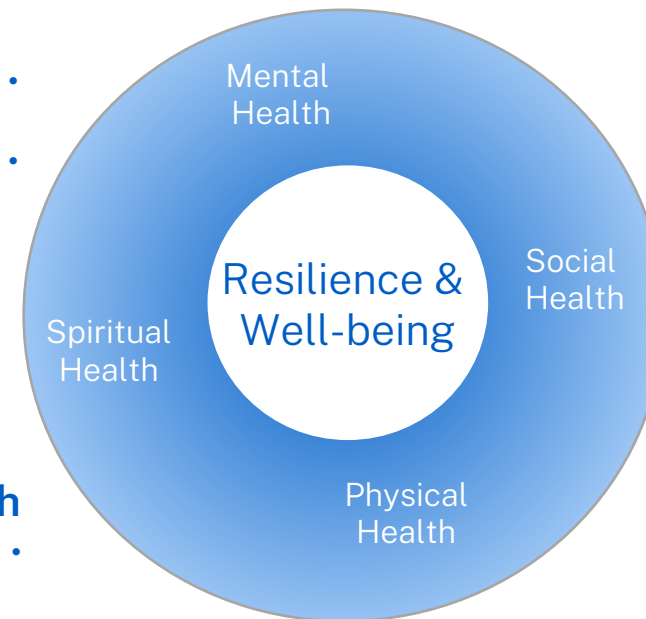
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## Physical Health

- Your physiological state.
- Can you physically respond to stressors, and reduce their impact of them?
- Sleep and recovery: Can your body eliminate toxic cortisol buildup? Can you relax?
- Healthy nourishment? Exercise.

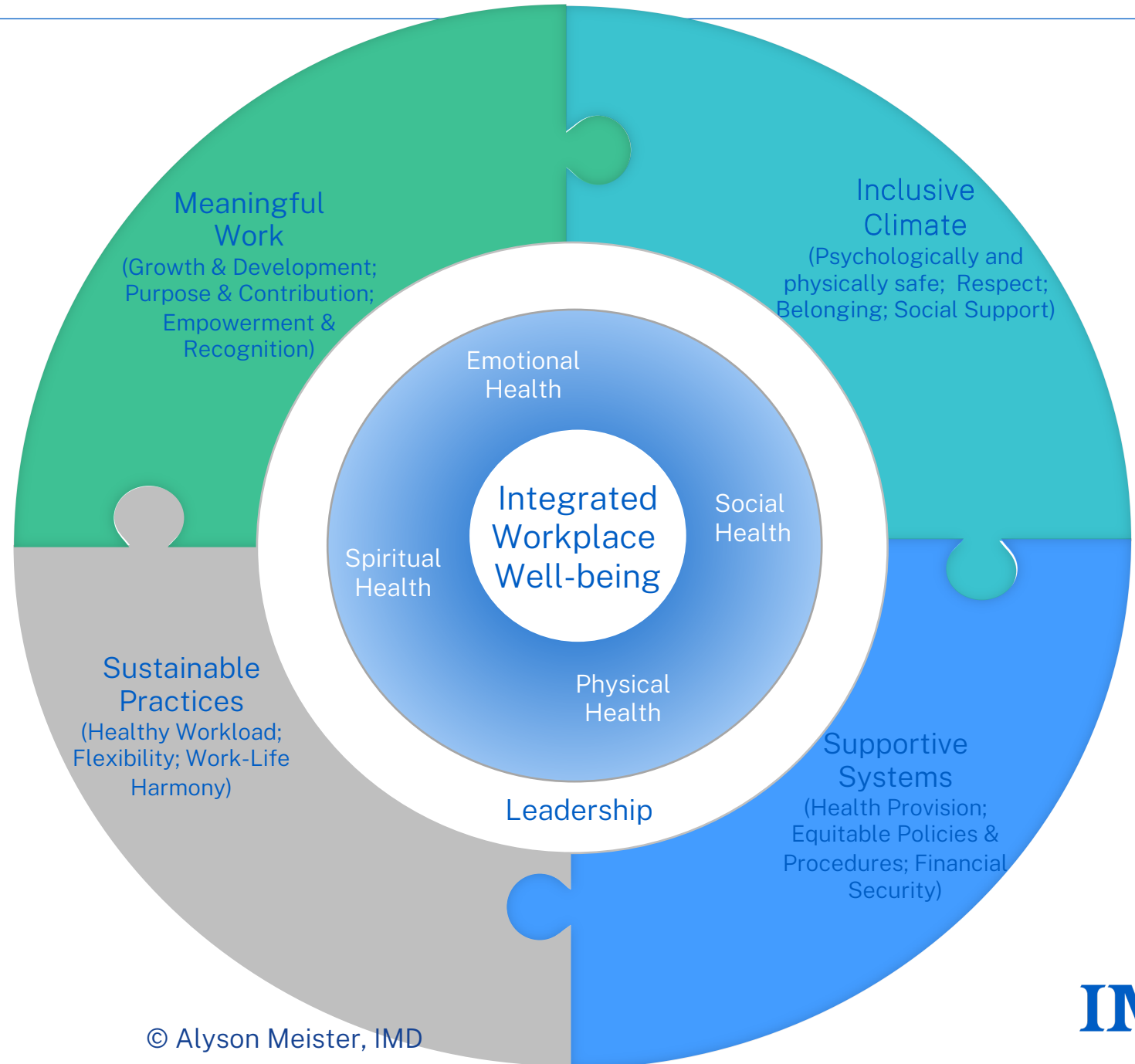
**My Self Rating (0-5):**

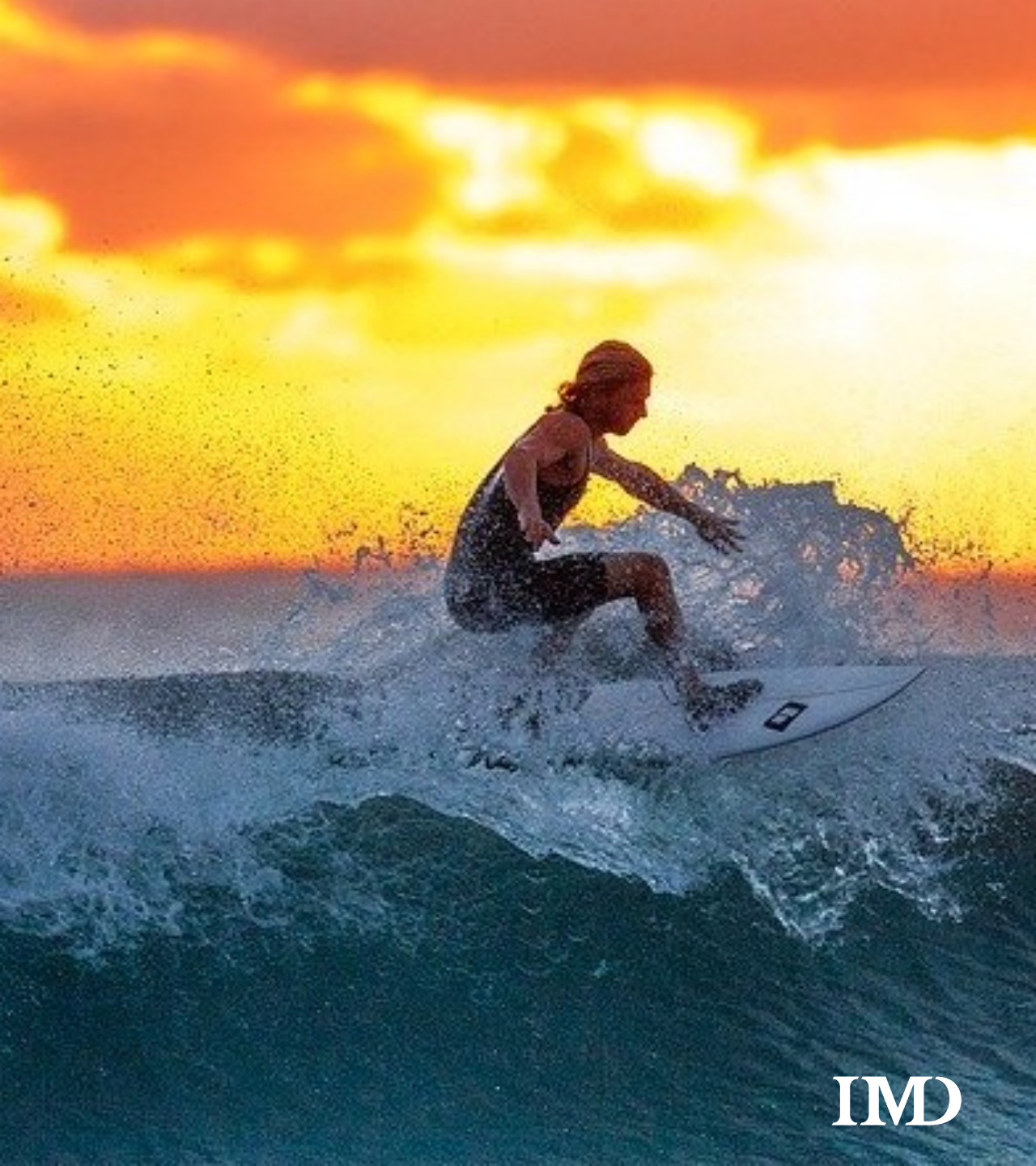
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# Integrated Workplace Wellbeing

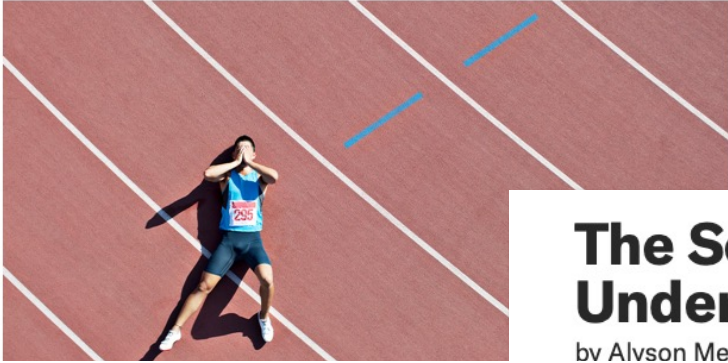




# Athletes Are Shifting the Narrative Around Mental Health at Work

by Alyson Meister and Maude Lavanchy

September 24, 2021



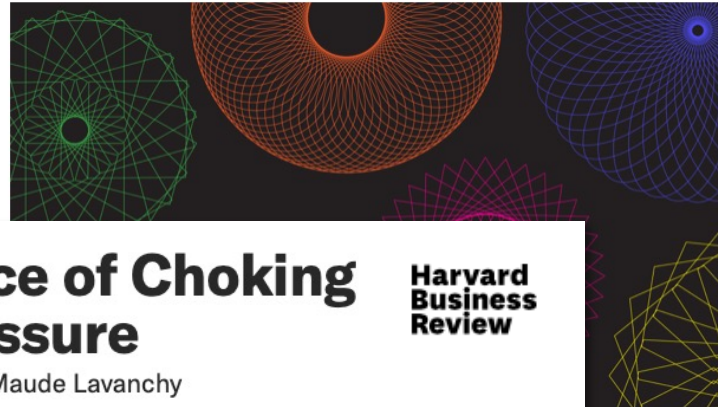
## The Science of Choking Under Pressure

by Alyson Meister and Maude Lavanchy

# Staying Mindful When You're Working Remotely

by Alyson Meister and Amanda Sinclair

March 16, 2021



# How Managers Can Support Employees with Chronic Illnesses

by Alyson Meister and Victoria Woolfrey

February 08, 2021



Yulia Reznikov/ Getty Images



## How to stop worrying about employee mental health

FEATURE | 19 April 2022

You can turn your worry about your employees' mental health into constructive action when you learn what to watch for and when to act, write Alyson Meister, Kathleen M. Pike and Daryl Tol



# Breathe in the A.I.R.

Declining mental health is a global crisis, **Alyson Meister and Dominik Breitinger** explain how we can tackle it

**C**losely trailing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is a global mental health crisis. Declining mental health in the form of increased stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, depression, and burnout, not only infiltrate our minds, homes, and places of work, but have dire financial implications for organizations and economies alike.

