



# **Workplace Mental Health in Alberta – Workshop**

## **March 12, 2020 Edmonton**

**Dr. Bill Howatt**

President  
Howatt HR



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## Event Description

An interactive workshop, networking lunch, and panel discussion with leading experts in workplace psychological safety and HR strategy.

This workshop is targeted towards professionals in the field of Occupational Health & Safety (OHS), Human Resources (HR), and Organizational/Municipal Leaders who want to learn and discuss practical strategies for mental health in their workplaces.



## Learning Objectives/Topics

The current Alberta economic environment presents additional challenges for employers charged with creating/maintaining psychologically safe workplaces. Reduced operational budgets, FTE resources, rising psychological health claims (STD/LTD/WCB), and overall uncertainty requires an integrated mental health strategy. This workshop speaks to:

- Constructing a psychological health strategy
- Reviewing your mental health metrics and determine if you are being effective
- Learning strategies for resiliency
- Strategizing effective metrics in mental health
- Connecting with other HR/OHS professionals to share Best Practices



## Contacts

AMHSA Calgary & Sherwood Park

• Toll-Free: 1.800.267.9764  
safety@amhsa.net

• We are open from Monday  
to Friday, 7:30 am to 4 pm



"Promoting quality health and safety management systems by delivering excellent customer focused safety education and consultation services since 1990"

# 12

March 2020

9 am - 3 pm

NAIT Productivity and  
Innovation Centre

10210 Princess Elizabeth Ave NW,  
Edmonton, AB

# Workplace Mental Health in Alberta - Workshop

## Creating Psychologically Safe Workplaces in Adverse Economic Times



Presents







## Dr. Bill Howatt

Howatt HR

Bill is the President of Howatt HR, with over 25 years of experience working with senior executives at progressive and successful organizations nationally and internationally.

William Howatt Ph.D., Ed.D., is widely recognized for his expertise in mental health, coping skills, strategic HR and management effectiveness. Bill has published numerous books and articles and is a regular contributor to the Globe and Mail.

## Craig Hrynychuk

Executive Director, AMHSA



Craig is a senior leader with a passion for Operations, and over 20-years of progressive experience in Health, Safety, Environment, Sustainable Development, and Shared Services roles.

Specializing in mid-large employer defined goal/term organizational transformation in diverse industries including: infrastructure construction, utilities (generation, distribution, transmission, telecommunication), manufacturing, aerospace, healthcare, and non-profit associations.

## Olana Todoruk

Senior Director Benefit Services, AUMA



Olana has over 15 years of experience in the benefits profession, working with both private and public sector employee plans, including mandatory and voluntary plan designs.

Her experience has provided her the opportunity to understand benefit plan management from the employer, provider, and third-party administrator perspectives. Olana has also led a team of claims adjudicators responsible for assessing claims and return to work facilitation, giving her a wealth of knowledge in the area of disability claims management. Olana's primary focus is to partner closely with AUMA vendor partners and valued members, ensuring all of their needs are met and dedicated delivering member service excellence.



## Dr. Lisa Ross-Rodriguez

Director OHS Prevention Strategies

Lisa is passionate about improving the health and wellness of others. An experienced leader with a demonstrated history of working in academia, health and government administration.

Skilled in research, evaluation, life sciences, government, data analysis, and laboratories. Strong professional with graduate degrees in Medical Sciences combined with training in Clinical Laboratory Management and Project Management. Experienced educator and public speaker. Dedicated to the development of self and others.

## Michelle Semotiuk

Manager Special Care Services, WCB Alberta



Michelle Semotiuk is a manager with the Millard Health & Special Care Services division of the Workers' Compensation Board Alberta.

Her unit is comprised of eight special care services claims teams, which provide disability management of severe physical and psychological injury claims. Michelle consults frequently with other Boards in Canada regarding best practices for the management of psychological injuries, and is passionate about delivering value to the stakeholders within the workers compensation system.

## Jennifer Miller, Q.C.

Partner, Bennett Jones LLP



Jennifer is a nationally recognized practitioner in Canadian health and safety law. Her practice includes occupational health and safety risk and incident management, defence of occupational health and safety prosecutions and related employment law. Jennifer is frequently engaged to speak and write on health and safety issues for numerous educational organizations, corporations and professional associations. She is a former member of the University of Alberta Health Law Institute and endows a health and safety scholarship at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law.

# Contact Info

Dr. Bill Howatt – [jennifer@howatthr.com](mailto:jennifer@howatthr.com)

Craig Hrynychuk – [craig@amhsa.net](mailto:craig@amhsa.net)

Olana Todoruk – [Otodoruk@auma.ca](mailto:Otodoruk@auma.ca)

Dr. Lisa Ross-Rodriguez – [Lisa.Ross-Rodriguez@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Lisa.Ross-Rodriguez@gov.ab.ca)

Michelle Semotiuk – [michelle.semotiuk@wcb.ab.ca](mailto:michelle.semotiuk@wcb.ab.ca)

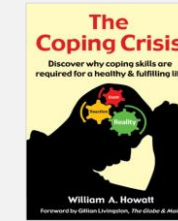
Jennifer Miller – [millerJ@bennettjones.com](mailto:millerJ@bennettjones.com)

# Dr. Bill Howatt Ph.D., ED.d., Post Doc UCLA



Author:  
Certified Management Essentials  
(CME)  
10-course program  
  
Pathway to Coping Skills: 9-week  
interactive program

Author:  
The Coping Crisis



President Howatt HR

Chief Research Workforce Productivity The Conference Board of Canada

Chair National CSA Standard on Substance use related Impairment and Member CSA National OHS  
Steering Committee

Former Chief of Research & Development Officer Workforce Productivity Morneau Shepell



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Regular contributor to:



**The  
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# Agenda

**1**

**Psychological Safety at Work**

**2**

**Levels for Impacting Psychological Safety**

**3**

**PHS and Team Performance**

**4**

**Considerations for your strategy**

# Ice Breaker

- What is psychological health and safety in the workplace?
- How does your behaviour influence the experience of others with respect to psychological safety?
- How does your coworkers level psychological safety impact yours and their productivity?







# 1. Foundation of psychological Health and Safety in the workplace

# What is psychological safety?

- “Psychological safety” refers to the degree of risk that an average employee is or could be exposed to in the workplace that can result in mental harms. (e.g., bullying and harassment)
- Psychological safety is also CULTURE that everyone feels welcomed, included, valued and open to challenge the status quo.

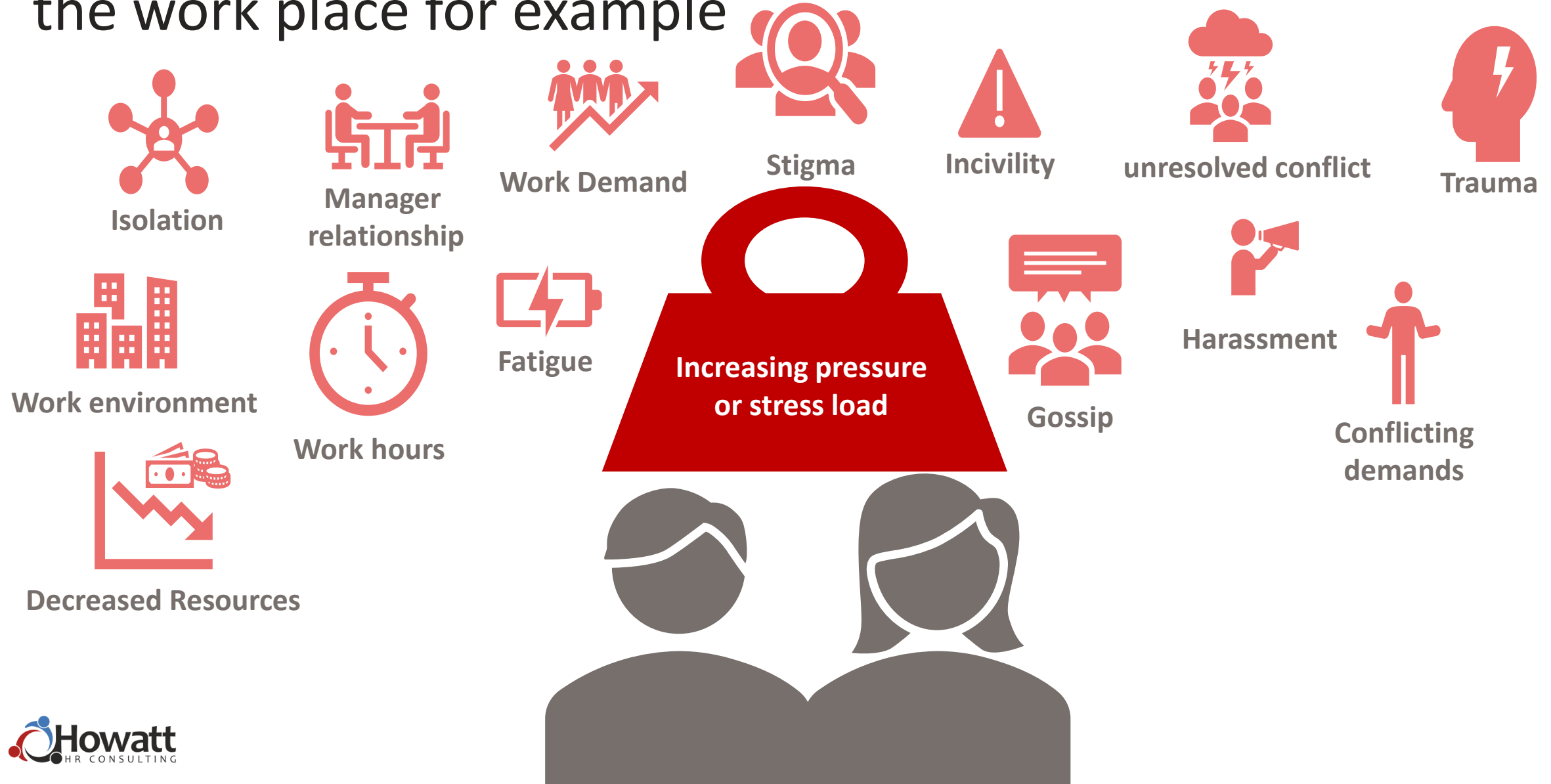
**“Safe” is the key word in psychological safety, as some provinces are taking proactive steps to prevent mental injuries (e.g., mandated respectful workplace policies).**

# Mental injuries in the workplace

- These are psychological injuries that can be the result of an environmental, organizational or individual stressor.
- Common forms of mental injuries at work are:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Post traumatic stress disorder

**Understanding the difference between illness vs. injury can significantly impact how it is treated.**

# Hazards that can influence the risk of psychological harms in the work place for example





# Question?



- What are the biggest concerns in your workplace today?

# Continual exposure to risk can result in mental distress

- Exposure to these kinds of workplace factors can result in mental distress.
- The degree of severity, duration and intensity of mental distress as a result of workplace related stress will ultimately determine a person's risk for developing a diagnosable mental illness.
- Note: Employees can't self-diagnose; only medical professionals and psychologists can properly diagnose mental illness and verify that the root cause is work-related.



# The link between mental injuries and a psychologically safe workplace

- A mental injury is not connected to not being “tough” or “resilient”.
- A mental injury is like falling when skiing, it can happen to anyone.
- Chronic and repeated exposure to incidents are more common causes of mental injury.



# Stage 1 – Inclusion Safety

## Key stages of Psychological safety

Inclusion Safety

Learner Safety

Contributor Safety

Challenger Safety



- All employees accept you and grant you a shared identity.
- This created and sustained through renewed admittance to the group and repeated indications of acceptance.

**Key Concept:** The need to be accepted precedes the need to be heard.



# Stage 2 – Learner Safety

## Key stages of Psychological safety

Pre-work Surveys

Learner Safety

Contributor Safety

Challenger Safety

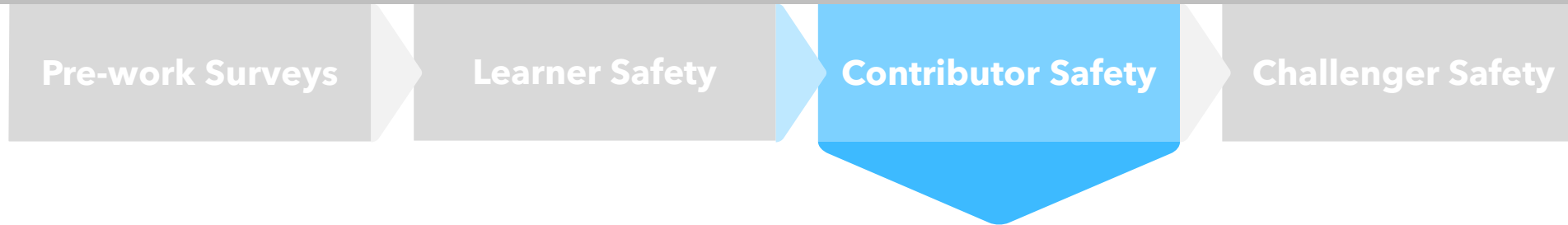


- You feel safe to engage in the discovery process, ask questions, experiment, and even make mistakes.
- The environment grants safe passage to learning opens the buds of potential, cultivating confidence, resilience, and independence.

**Key Concept:** When the environment belittles, demeans, or harshly corrects people in the learning process, learner safety is destroyed.

# Stage 3 – Contributor Safety

## Key stages of Psychological safety



- The transition to contributor safety may be tied to progression in the company, credentials, title, position, and the formal conferral of authority.
- Employees can be denied contributor safety for illegitimate reasons (e.g., arrogance, insecurity of the leader, personal or institutional bias).

**Key Concept:** As the individual demonstrates competence, the organization normally grants more autonomy to contribute.

# Stage 4 – Challenger Safety

## Key stages of Psychological safety

Pre-work Surveys

Learner Safety

Contributor Safety

Challenger Safety



- Challenge the status quo without retribution, reprisal, or the risk of damaging your personal standing or reputation.
- Gives you the confidence to speak the truth.

**Key Concept:** Where there is no tolerance for candor, there is no constructive dissent. Where there is no constructive dissent, there is no innovation.

## 2. Levels for impacting psychological health and safety

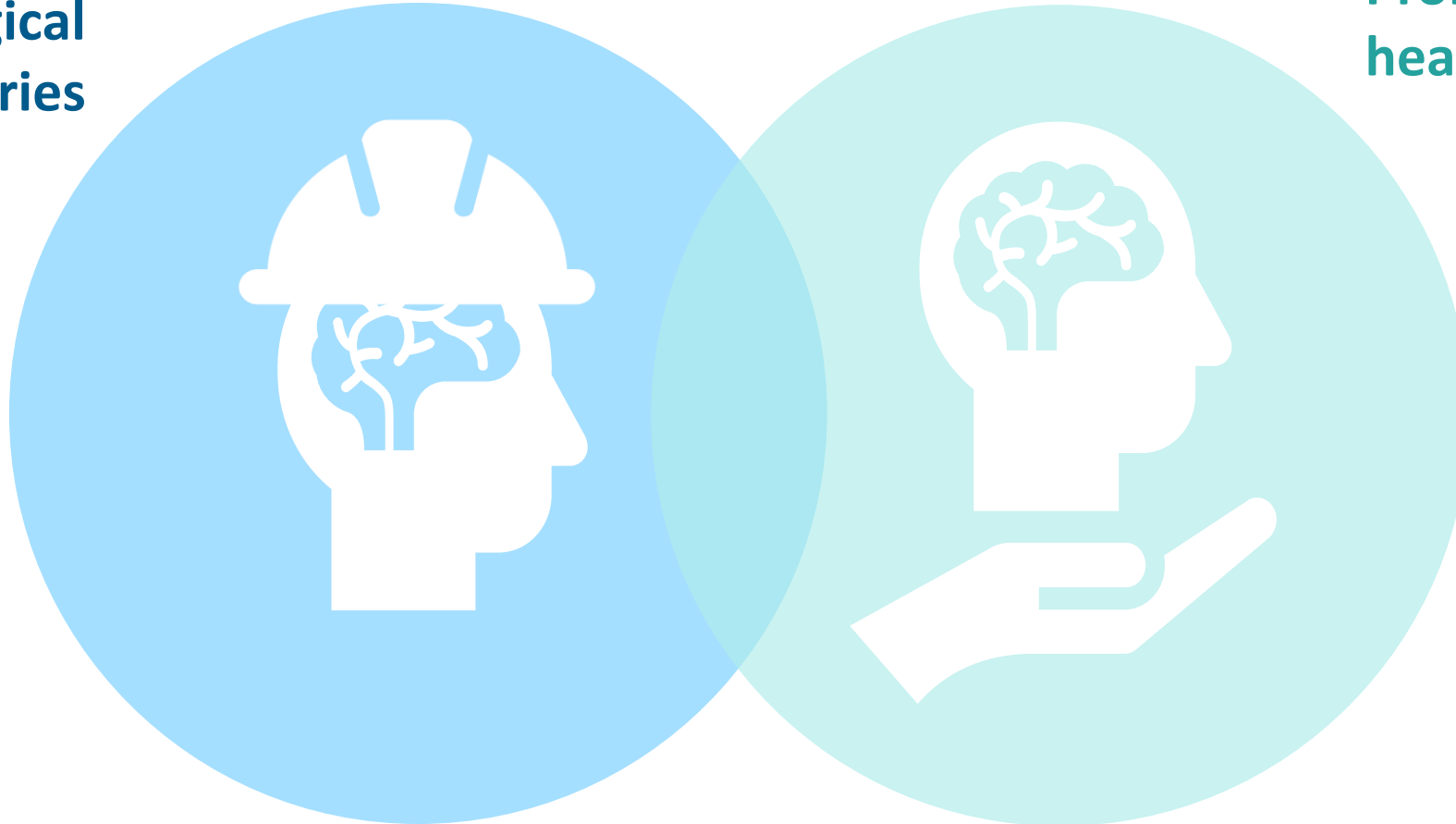




# Organizations encourage psychological safety for two core reasons

**Reduce the risk for  
psychological  
harms and injuries**

**Promote mental  
health**



# Question?



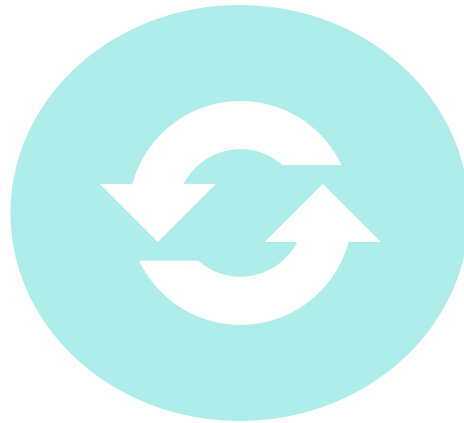
- What are key elements of a psychological health and safety strategy?

# What does an effective psychological health and safety strategy include?

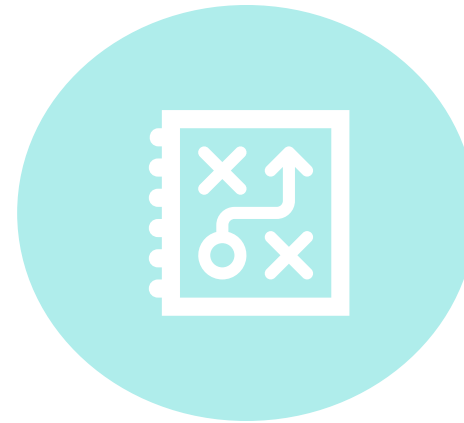
- The Psychological Health and Safety premise is based on four key elements:



**Foster Joint-Responsibility**



**Implement continuous improvement (PDCA)**



**Adopting core concepts from the CSA standard**



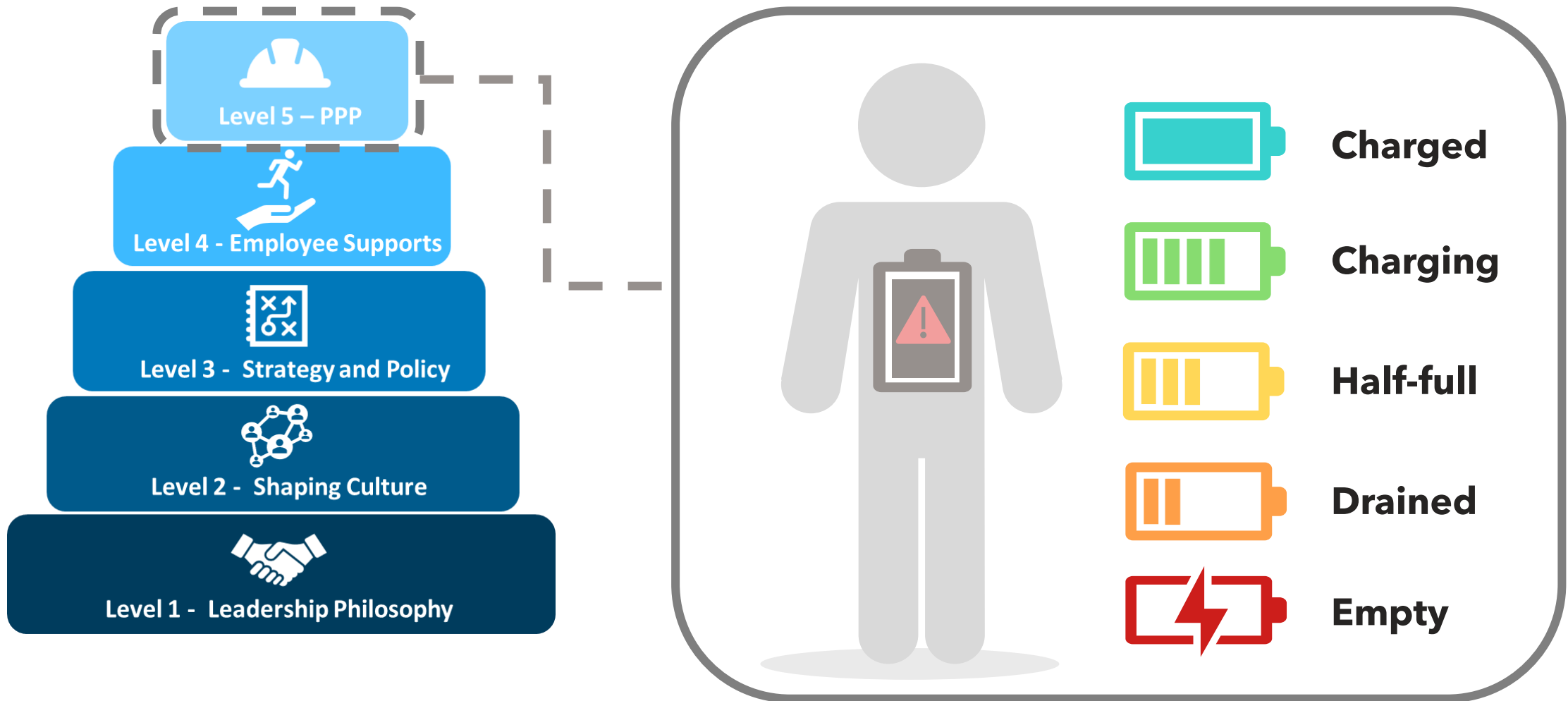
**Leader involvement**

# Levels for Impacting Psychological Safety in the Workplace










An employees Proactive Psychological Protection is their level of mental fitness and can establishes their level of vulnerability



Our research has shown an employee mental fitness can predict their potential vulnerability for psychological harms

MFI Profile	MFI Score	Perceived Stigma	Comfort talking to leader	Days Missed	DE	Days Unwell
 Charged	83	70	96	2.3	95%	7.6
 Charging	74	53	87	3.7	90%	11.8
 Half-full	65	44	76	3.5	88%	33.0
 Drained	56	35	59	4.5	86%	82.5
 Empty	45	23	48	5.8	82%	114.2

### 3. How psychological safety can impact the performance of your workplace



# How does psychological health and safety impact a well functioning team?

At your table...  
Discuss what  
psychological safety  
can promote in your  
team



# Google's Aristotle Project

- This research project examine what makes effective teams
- Team effectiveness was measured by
  - Executive Evaluation
  - Team leader evaluation
  - Team member evaluation
  - Sales performance against quarterly quota
- The key finding was it is less about who is on the team and more about how the team works together

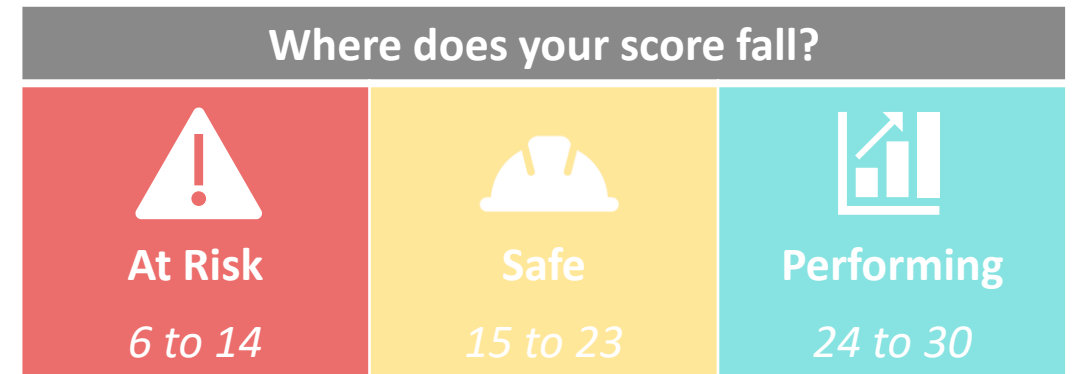
## 5 Factors that most influenced team effectiveness



# Self rating of psychological safety of the teams in your workplace

- On a sheet of paper give the following questions a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

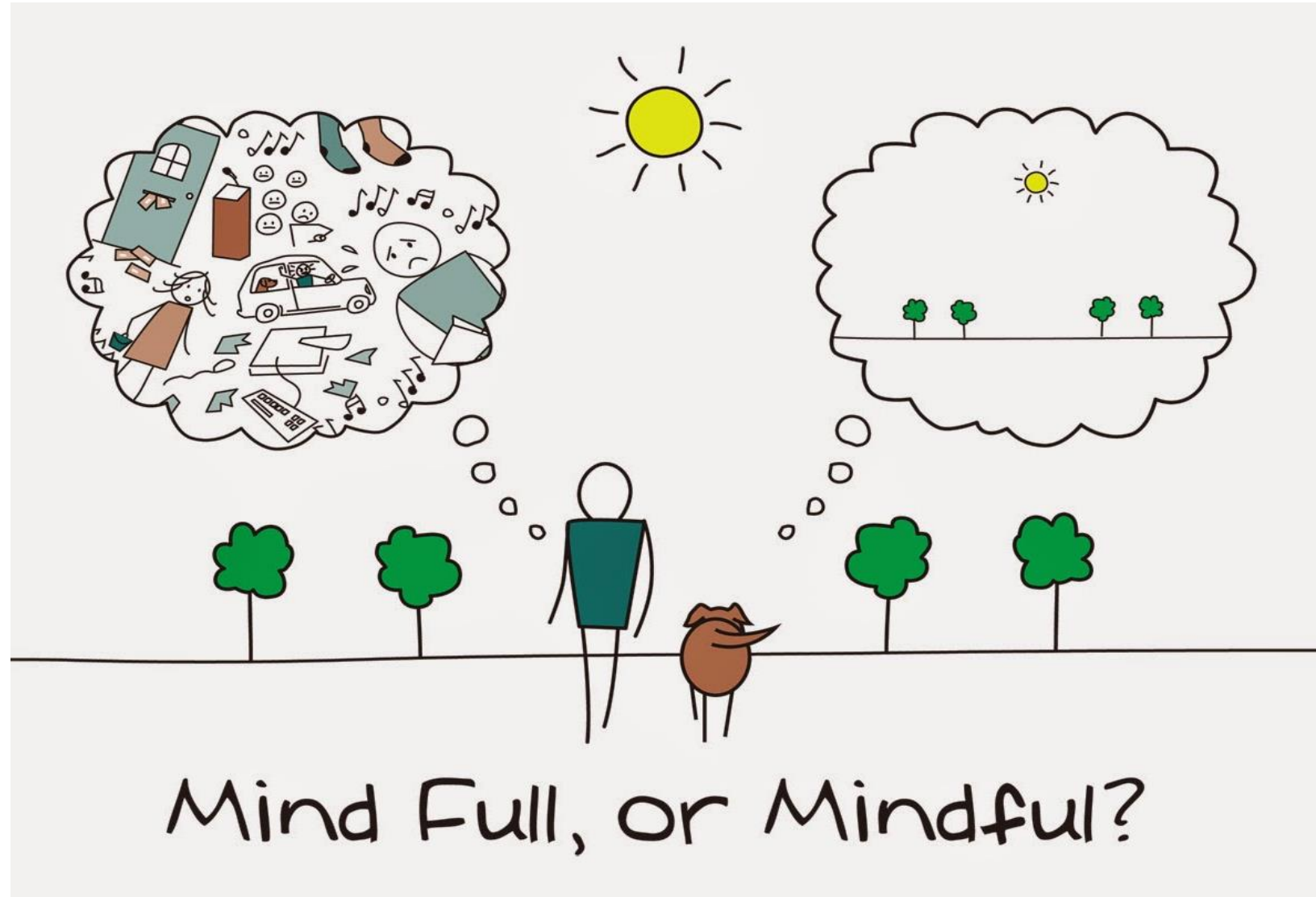
1. I feel safe talking to my direct manager one-on-one
2. I feel comfortable asking my direct manager questions
3. I feel safe asking for help from my direct manager
4. I feel supported by my direct manager
5. I feel safe receiving feedback from my direct manager
6. I feel valued by my direct manager





# 15 minute break for mindful reflection

- Be here in this moment
- not then or there but here.
- With intention, take 15 minutes and allow yourself to **STOP – BE – ENJOY NOW**



### 3. Considerations for building a psychological health and safety strategy in your workplace



# Question?



- Are you assessing the mental health of your employees?



45 %

27 %

65 %

35 %

3  
4

## Part A – Get the right data

01/07

02/07

03/07

02/07

# Assessing for risk factors that impact psychological safety



# Assessing for risk factors that impact psychological safety (cont.)

**Be aware for your organization there could be other factors that can impact an employee experience such as:** Inclusion, manager-employee relationship, employees current mental health, employees' risk for impairment, employees resiliency and ability to cope.

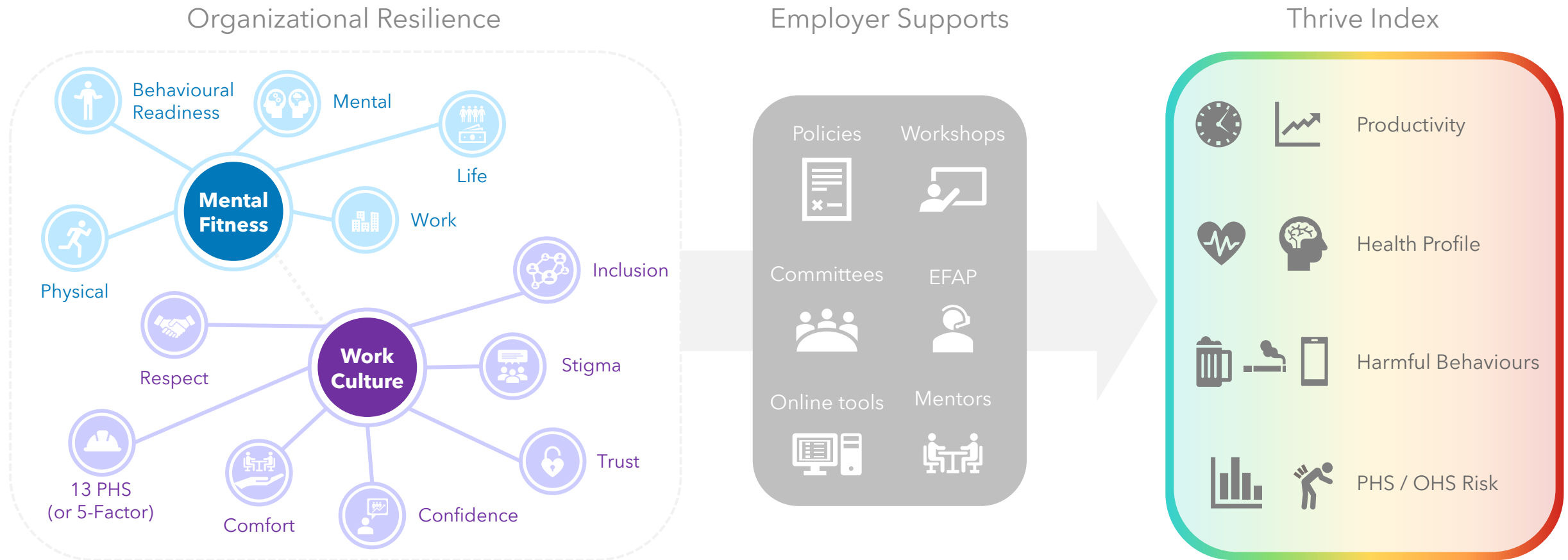
**To learn more about each factor watch a short video on each**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2NuAPXp8ohZmoVaECI6sRiV9IQ25XkId>





# Howatt HR has developed a framework to explore the extent to which an organization is thriving



# What to look for in your assessment tool



**1**

**Provide employees with their own report**

**2**

**Look at employee profiles**

**3**

**Evaluate your support options**



## Part B – Auditing your culture

# Question?



- What percent of employees would be able to explain your psychological safety policy?
- Example: the expectations on them, how to report issues

# One way to understand your culture is to audit the employee experience for non-conformity



**Pre-work  
Surveys**



**Structured  
Interviews**



**Employee  
Focus Groups**



**Environment  
Observation**

# An Alternative is to Conduct a Rapid Psychological Health and Safety Gap Analysis

Step 1: Randomly select a group of 10 to 15 employees, with representation from frontline, middle and senior leaders to complete the online rapid audit tool (<https://www.howatthronline.com/phsgap/>).

Step 2: Invite the group to bring their results to a meeting where they can share and explain their scores.

Step 3: After reviewing the 7-category, 21-item rapid audit with the group, pick the two areas that appear to be at highest risk and could benefit from focus and action.

# After completing the rapid audit, examine the understanding of your policies for psychological safety

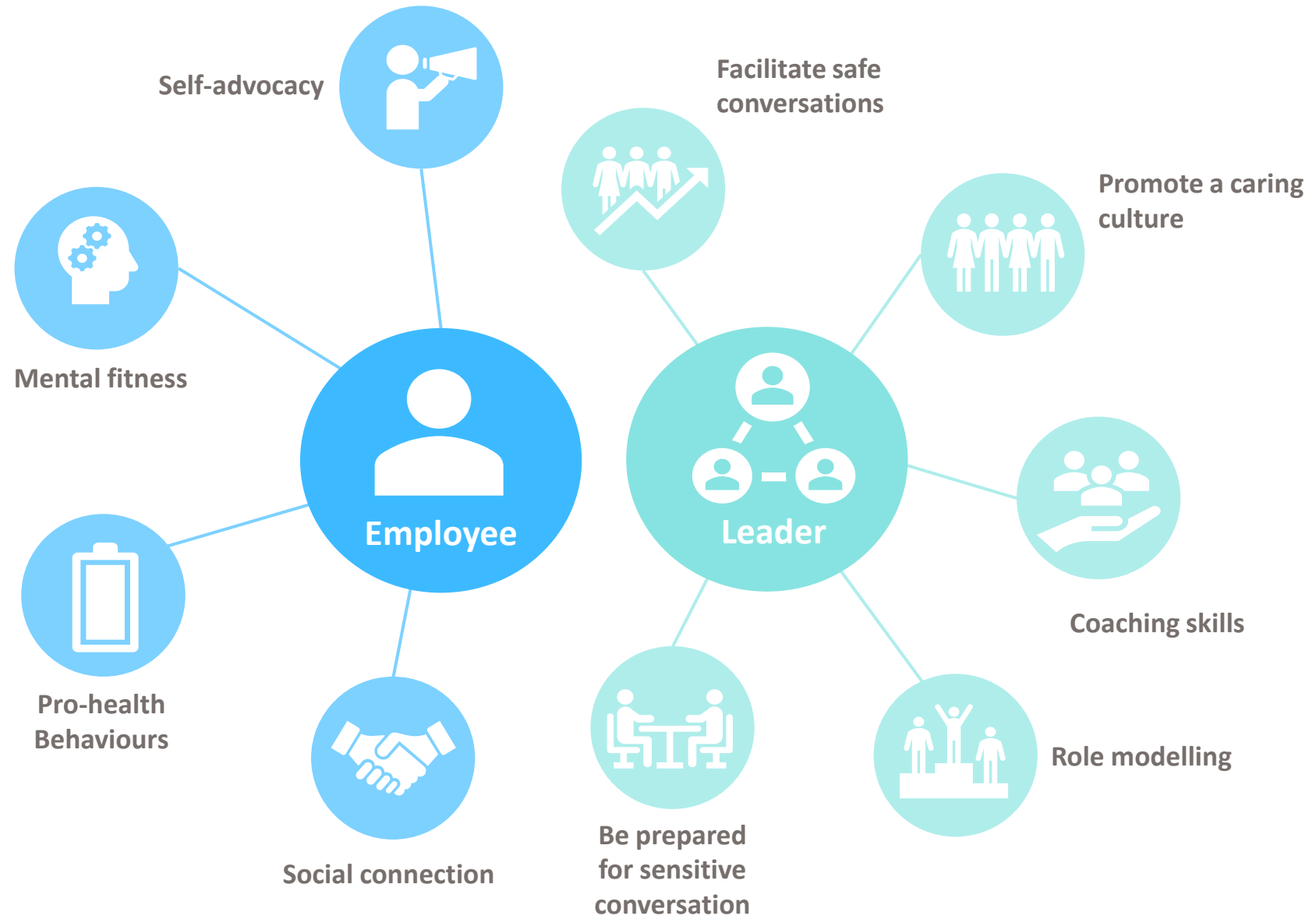
**Step 1: Randomly select a group of 10 to 15 employees, with representation from frontline, middle and senior leaders, ask them to read their existing policy.**

**Step 2: In their own words, ask them to explain the expectations on them and the organization, as well as how to report issues or concerns. Record their explanation and compare the responses of each employee.**

**Step 3: if over 80% of responses are not similar, consider adding a short employee overview of the policy using your employees voice.**



# Key behaviours for leaders and employees to consider



## Part D – Role model pro-health behaviours

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# 4 micro-skills that you can use to charge your battery



Prioritize  
**Sleep**



Be  
**Active**



Find a  
**Connection**



Self  
**Advocate**



# Closing Notes

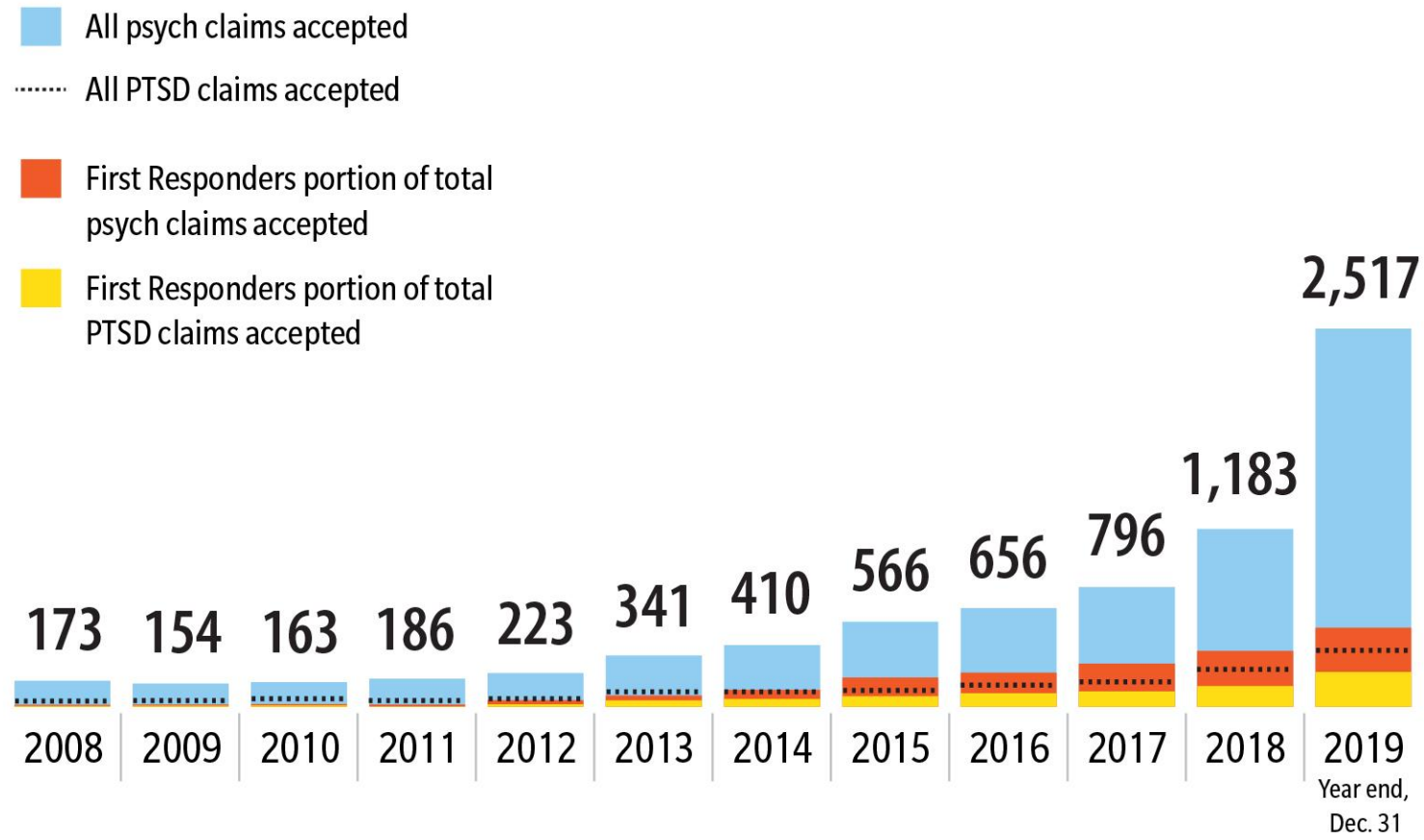
1. Psychological safety is also CULTURE that everyone feels welcomed, included, valued and open to challenge the status quo.
2. Individual resilience is like your PPE, focus on behaviours that can charge your battery and reduce your risk of vulnerability
3. The number one factor that contributes to team performance is psychological safety.
4. Get the right data, focus on the key behaviours that the organization and employees can influence.
5. Assess the social norms of your organization through focus groups and interviews.

# Call to Action: complete a free online tool

- Employee's Perceived Psychological Health & Safety Risk Screen
- The purpose of this screening tool is to increase employee awareness of the relationship between perceived psychological safety and human factors psychological risk in your work situation.
- Visit: <https://www.howatthronline.com/psychhealthsafety/>



# Psychological Claim Volume, First Responders\* and PTSD



\* 2018 on includes correction officers



# Primary Psychological Injury (PPI)

## PPI Volume for Accident Years 2016 to 2020 (YTD)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PPI	663	804	1313	2009	312
All Claims <sup>1</sup>	105,691	111,509	117,011	116,290	17,644
PPI % of All Claims	0.6%	0.7%	1.1%	1.7%	1.8%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes denied claims



■ 2016 ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

## Chronic vs. Acute PPI

Type	Description	% of All PPI
Acute	Psych Injury-Traumatic Incident/Series of Incident	68%
Chronic	Psych Injury - Bullying or Harassment	18%
Chronic	Psych Injury - Other Progressive Onset	6%
Chronic	Psych Injury - Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault	4%
Chronic	Psych Injury - Workload	3%

## Secondary Psychological Injury (SPI)

### SPI Volume for Accident Years 2016 to 2020 (YTD)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
SPI	1,088	1,546	1,826	1,523	43
All Claims <sup>1</sup>	105,691	111,509	117,011	116,290	17,644
SPI % of All Claims	1.0%	1.4%	1.6%	1.3%	0.2%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes denied claims



■ 2016 ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

### Compensability

Year	Non-Compensable	Compensable	% Compensable
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2017	1,218	328	21%
2018	1,510	316	17%
2019	1,276	247	16%

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Thank You

