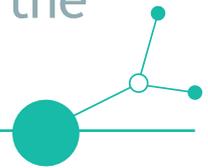


# Deliverable D.1.2.1

Training material for prevention of burnout in the workplace



Version 1  
06 2025





# CONTENT

**1. TRAINING PRESENTATION:** Understanding and Preventing Occupational Burnout in the Workplace

---

**2. TRAINING SCENARIO**

---

**3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** Training Implementation in Test Countries

---

**4. COR-SA (M) & COR-SA (E) TOOL MANUAL:** Complementary tools for assessing the psychosocial aspects of the work environment

---

**5. SATISFACTORY SURVEY AND ONE-PAGE “NUGGETS” HANDOUTS FOR PARTICIPANTS**

# Understanding and Preventing Occupational Burnout in the Workplace

BURNOUT PREVENT



# Training schedule

---

## **Module 1 - Occupational burnout**

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 10-minute break

**Objective:** to build a shared understanding of occupational burnout, its symptoms, causes, and consequences  
- both at the individual and organisational level

## **Module 2 - Psychosocial risks in the workplace**

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 15-minute break

**Objective:** to increase participants' awareness of psychosocial risks in the workplace and their impact on psychological wellbeing

## **Module 3: Stress - how it works and how we cope with it**

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 15-minute break

**Objective:** to understand how stress works and to explore one's own coping styles

## **Module 4 - Communication and relationships, daily practices**

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 10-minute break

**Objective:** Understanding the role of effective internal communication within the organisation.

## **Module 5 - COR-SA (E) and (M) - From problem recognition to joint action**

**Duration:** 45 minutes + 10-minute break

**Objective:** Introduction to the COR-SA (E) and (M) tools

## **Module 6: Reflection and Closing - "What am I taking with me?"**

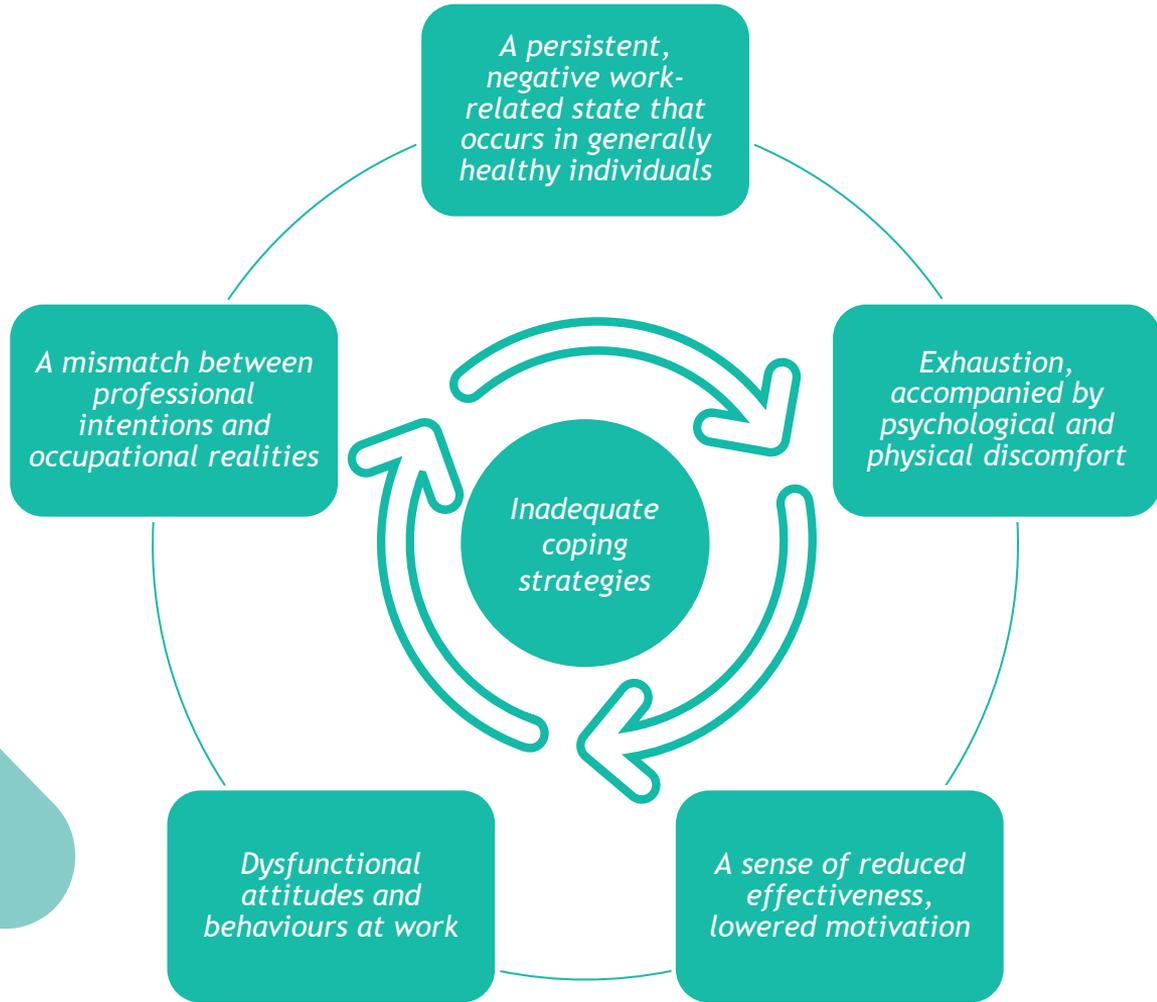
**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Objective:** Collective summarisation. What can everyone implement "from tomorrow"?

# Occupational burnout - mind map



# What is occupational burnout? Why is it important to understand it?



# Symptoms of burnout

## Emotional domain

A sense of being overwhelmed

Lack of drive or initiative

Loss of motivation

Cynicism or a negative attitude towards work

## Physical domain

Low energy or persistent fatigue

Headaches

Muscle tension

Sleep difficulties

Stomach problems or digestive issues

## Social domain

Avoiding social interactions

Frequent conflicts with others

Lack of patience

Reluctance to arrange meetings or appointments



# Stages of occupational burnout

TAGE OF BURNOUT	CHARACTERISTICS	SYMPTOMS	ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS
<b>1. Honeymoon</b>	A phase of enthusiasm, high motivation and strong engagement	Optimism, confidence in one's abilities, satisfaction with achievements	Taking on many tasks, feeling fulfilled and finding meaning in one's work
<b>2. Awakening</b>	A growing mismatch between the idealised image of the role and the reality	Feeling overwhelmed, disappointment, psychosomatic symptoms: fatigue, headaches, sleep difficulties	Intensifying effort in order to maintain previous performance
<b>3. Irritability</b>	Decline in the quality of relationships, emotional detachment and aversion	Irritability, indifference, detachment, reluctance, stress-related symptoms (e.g. stomach pains)	Conflicts with others, growing resentment towards clients
<b>4. Full burnout</b>	Physical and psychological exhaustion caused by work	Loss of motivation, feeling out of control, cynicism, depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue	Significant drop in effectiveness, social withdrawal
<b>5. Apathy</b>	Final and most intense stage	Chronic mental and physical exhaustion, chronic depression.	Adverse behavioural changes, minimal interactions, hostility towards colleagues.

**Renewal:** Restoring balance, reflection and renewed hope. Gradual recovery of physical and psychological resources. Seeking and accepting support, rest and regeneration, developing new coping strategies.

## INDIVIDUAL

High empathy

Neuroticism

Chronic stress

Work-life imbalance

## TEAM

Undefined or imprecisely defined responsibility and competencies

Poor level of communication

Lack of mutual support

Competition and rivalry instead of collaboration

## ORGANISATIONAL

Workload

Control

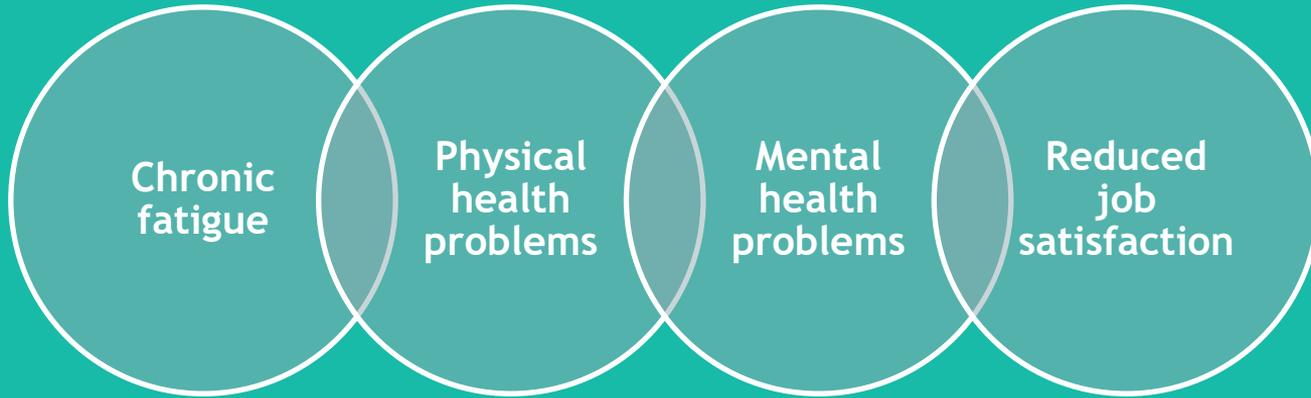
Reward

Values

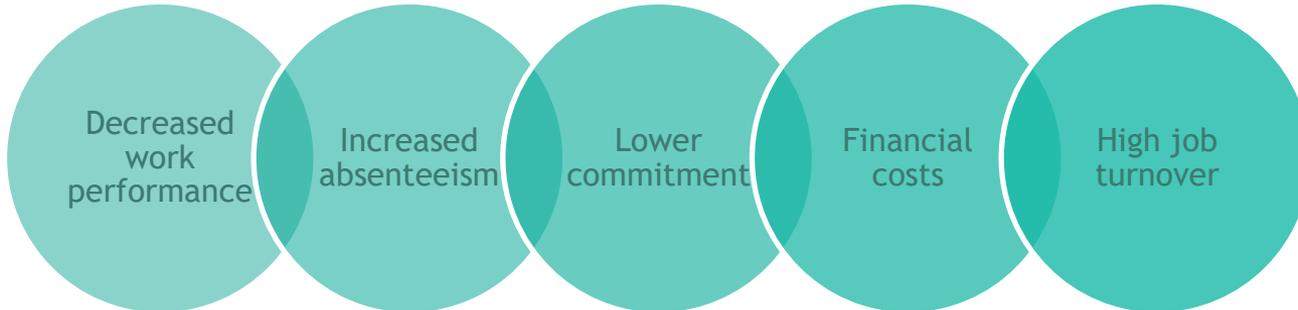
Community

Fairness

## Consequences of occupational burnout for the employee



## Consequences of occupational burnout for the organisation



# What are psychosocial risks?



---

Psychosocial hazards are those aspects of work design and the organisation and management of work, and their social and environmental contexts, which have the potential for causing psychological, social or physical harm.

# Types of psychosocial occupational risks

## Work content factors

- Work environment and equipment
- Task design
- Workload and pace of work
- Work schedule

## Work context factors

- Organisational culture and functioning
- Role within the organisation
- Career development
- Decision-making and control
- Interpersonal relationships at work

# New technologies - risks and concerns

**Transformation** Automation, robotics, and AI change how tasks are performed.

**Technostress** A modern adjustment disorder, linked to chronic anxiety and fatigue.

**Managing** Providing technical support and assessing if tools meet employee needs.



# Psychosocial risks and occupational burnout

Research highlights the connection between burnout and a wide range of factors, both organisational and individual in nature. In terms of the work environment, key challenges may include:

Communication problems  
and conflicts

Role ambiguity

Unfair reward systems

Excessive time pressure

Lack of control

Value conflicts



# Consequences of psychosocial risks for the employee and the organisation

## Effects of Work-Related Stress on Employees

Physiological Effects (muscle tension, rapid or shallow breathing, headaches, digestive issues, nervous movements)	Emotional and Cognitive Effects (anxiety, fear, anger, mood swings, depression, poor memory, concentration, decision-making, decreased creativity)	Work Performance Impact (decline in work quality and consistency, loss of control, motivation, engagement, increased absenteeism, lateness, long breaks, withdrawal)	Social and Behavioural Changes (avoidance, reduced interaction, aggression, bullying, poor relationships, risky behaviours - substance use, accidents)
--	--	--	--

### Effects of work-related stress at the organisational level:

- Absenteeism
- High employee turnover
- High rate of sick leave
- Inefficient use of working time
- Decreased productivity
- Strikes or unrest
- Resistance to organisational change

# How to prevent psychosocial risks in the workplace?

Prevention refers to actions taken in advance to avoid or at least reduce the negative effects of psychosocial risks. The aim is to protect employees' health and improve the overall functioning of the organisation.

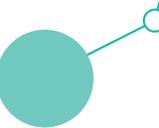
Primary prevention

Secondary prevention

Tertiary prevention

By identifying and eliminating psychosocial risks at work, we can...

- protect employees' mental and physical health.
- improve work efficiency and quality.
- reduce costs related to absenteeism and staff turnover.
- build a better team atmosphere and improve communication.
- boost innovation and openness to change.
- meet legal and ethical obligations.





# Map of psychosocial risks and preventive actions

---

Exercise

# What is stress?

Stress is a natural reaction of the body - it can boost energy and motivation (*eustress*), but it can also become harmful when it lasts too long (*distress*).

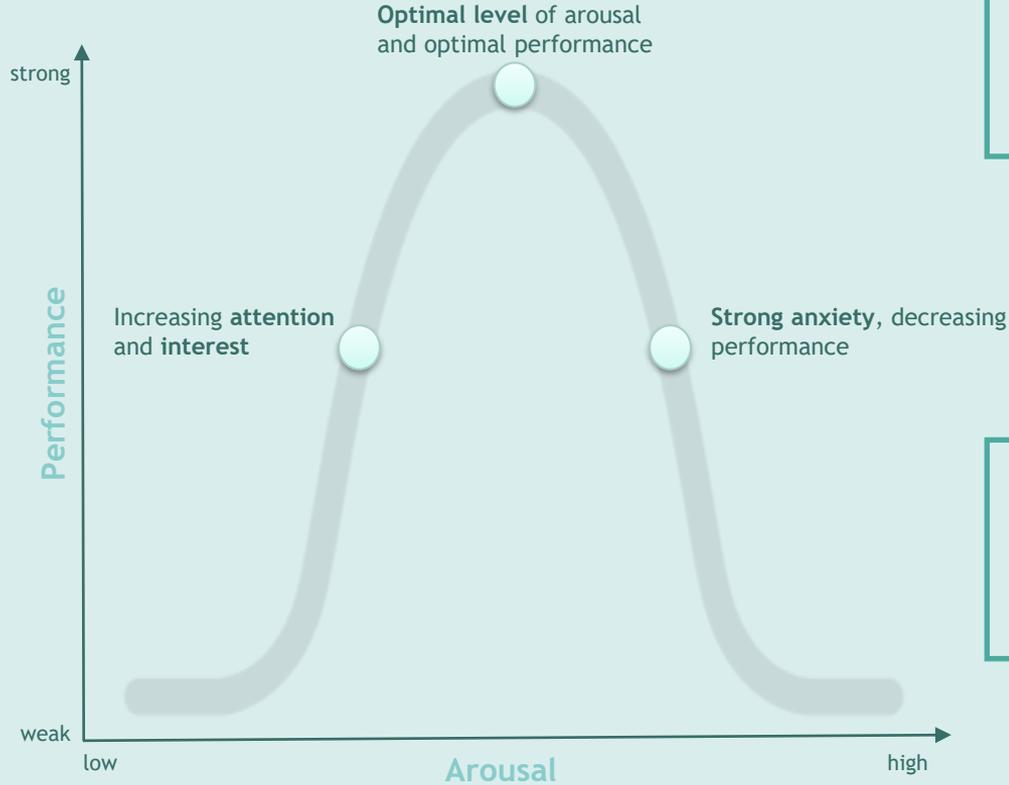
Stress can affect us in different ways:

In the short term: increased energy and focus\*

In the long term: psychological and physiological consequences

When does stress work in your favour, and when does it become harmful?

# The bell curve of arousal (*Yerkes-Dodson law*)



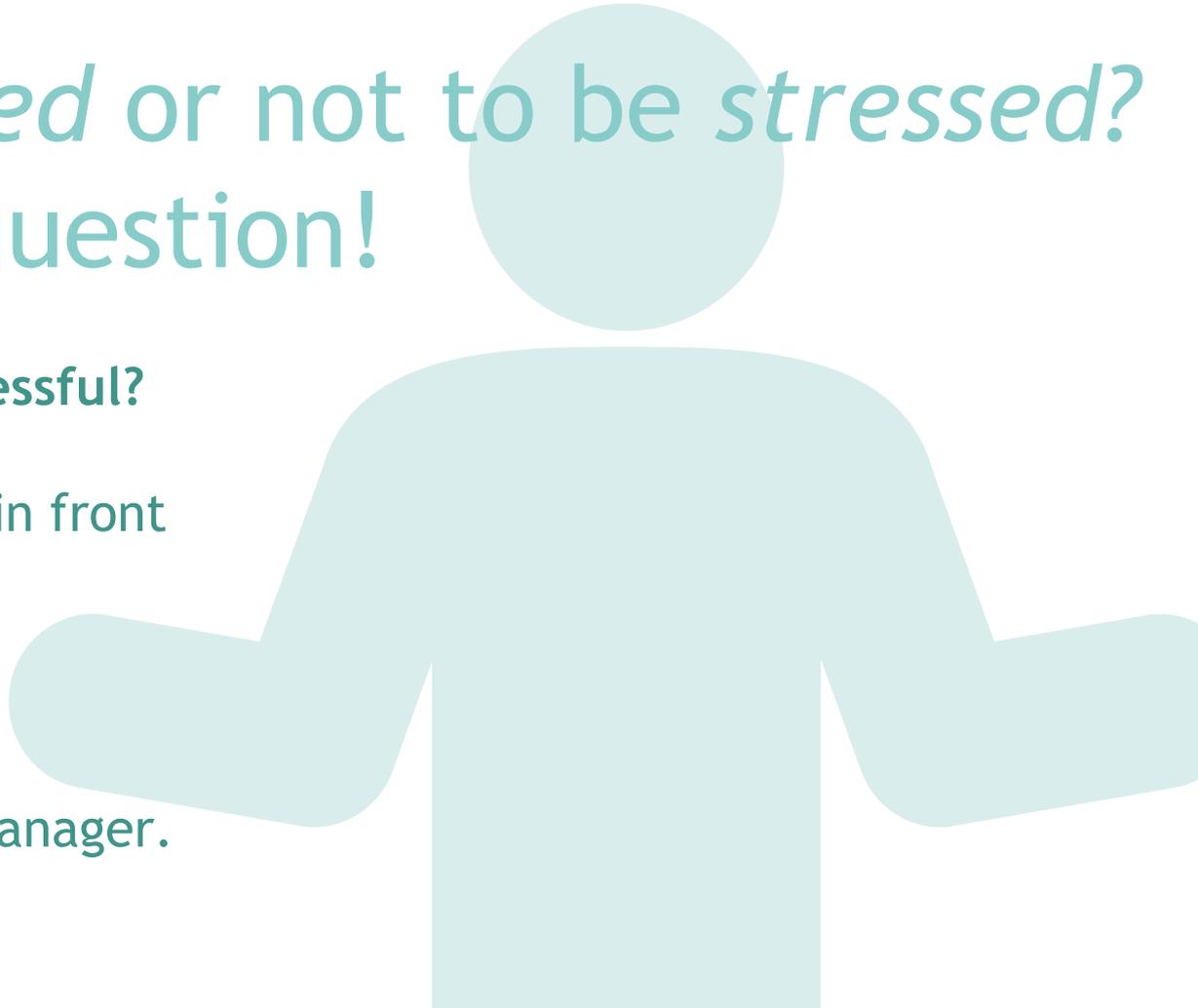
Short-term, mild stress increases focus and improves performance

Long-term and/or high-level stress may have negative impact on performance, especially in difficult tasks

# To be *stressed* or not to be *stressed*? That is the question!

**Are those situations stressful?**

1. Giving a presentation in front of your team.
2. Meeting with a client.
3. Change of the team manager.



# Stress as a transaction between the individual and the environment



## EMPLOYEE



## SITUATION

### NEUTRAL VS POSITIVE SITUATION

Neutral - has no meaning for us  
Positive/supportive - has positive meaning, e.g., good news



### PRIMARY APPRAISAL

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP - OUR MIND "CHECKS" WHAT THE SITUATION MEANS TO US AND EVALUATES WHETHER IT IS NEUTRAL, POSITIVE OR STRESSFUL SITUATION



### SECONDARY APPRAISAL

WE ASSESS OUR RESOURCES - SUPPORT, TIME, SKILLS - EVERYTHING THAT CAN HELP US DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGE.

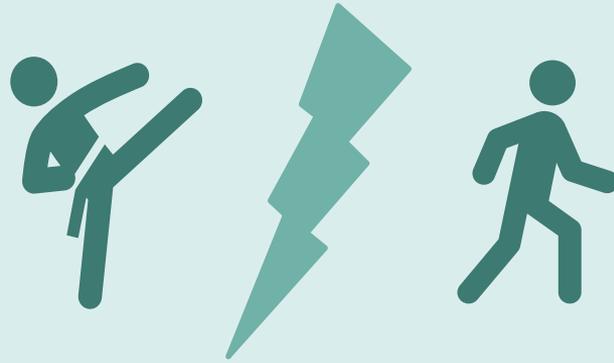
**STRESSFUL SITUATION**  
Threatening, difficult, demanding - for example, a tough conversation with a supervisor or conflict with a team member



**EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING**  
Focused on managing emotions rather than solving the problem. The person tries to deal with the stress-related tension and emotions, not the problem itself.

**PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING**  
Focused on understanding the situation and looking for a solution. The person tries to find the cause and actively work on what can be done.

# The "fight or flight" response



Walter Cannon (1915) observed that in response to a stressor, the body automatically triggers a biological survival mechanism that prepares it for quick action - either to confront the threat or to escape from it. This reaction is driven by stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, produced by the adrenal glands.

# Types of stress

Have you ever experienced stress that passed quickly,  
and at other times, stress that lasted a long time?  
How did these situations differ?

## Acute stress

The body reacts quickly and strongly, but this state usually does not last long.

## Chronic stress

It is often not very intense, but it is constant and exhausting.

## Traumatic stress

This form of stress arises in response to exposure to an extreme or life-threatening event.



# Physiological symptoms of stress

## Short-term symptoms (immediate)

appear quickly, are typically reversible, and are related to the body's mobilisation state:

## Long-term symptoms (chronic)

appear with prolonged exposure to stress and can lead to more serious disorders



**Muscle tension** (stiffness, tightness, clenched jaw)



**Breathing** (shallow, rapid, hyperventilation)



**Pain** (headaches, back, neck, stomach, chest pain)



**Digestive issues** (diarrhoea, nausea, loss of appetite or overeating)



**Other symptoms** (fast heartbeat, trembling hands, sweating, dry mouth, teeth grinding)



**Somatic diseases** (body-related): obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, arteriosclerosis, heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders (e.g. irritable bowel syndrome), dermatological problems



**Hormonal and reproductive disorders:** menstrual irregularities, infertility, reduced sperm quality, impotence

# Psychological consequences of stress

## Symptoms at the emotional level

- fear, anxiety
- irritability, impulsiveness
- anger, outbursts of rage
- loss of control over emotions
- feeling overwhelmed, confused
- emotional tension, feeling depressed
- difficulty in relaxing, feeling constantly tense
- lowered mood, feelings of isolation
- loss of motivation, resignation
- depression, feelings of hopelessness

## Symptoms at the cognitive level

- memory problems, difficulty concentrating
- difficulty in processing and remembering information
- disorientation, difficulty in organising thoughts
- difficulty predicting consequences and planning actions
- difficulty in making decisions
- limited creativity
- a flurry of thoughts, difficulty in stopping the 'thought race'

# How do we cope with stress?

There are most commonly three main styles:

## Task-focused style

trying to solve the problem,  
identifying the cause of the stress,  
taking action.

This style works best when the situation is  
within our control.

## Emotion-focused style

focusing on emotions rather than the  
problem itself.

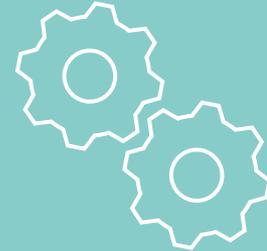
This might include talking to a close  
friend, practising breathing exercises,  
or relaxing.

This style can be helpful when the  
situation is beyond our control.

## Avoidance-focused style

distancing from the problem,  
avoiding thinking about it,  
using distractions,  
postponing action

The relief is temporary.  
If the problem persists, it can worsen stress  
and tension.



# Proactive stress management



## Recognition

- the ability to identify the stressor, paying attention to potentially threatening factors in the environment.

## Initial efforts to cope with the stressor

- proactive actions taken by the individual to solve the problem, such as creating plans or seeking information.

## Preliminary assessment of warning signals

- evaluating what in a given situation is problematic for the individual and how it might develop.

## Extraction and use of feedback

- developing the ability to gather and utilise information about the situation for future plans and goals.

## Accumulation of resources

- gathering resources before a stressor occurs.



## Stress management techniques

**Relaxation  
techniques**

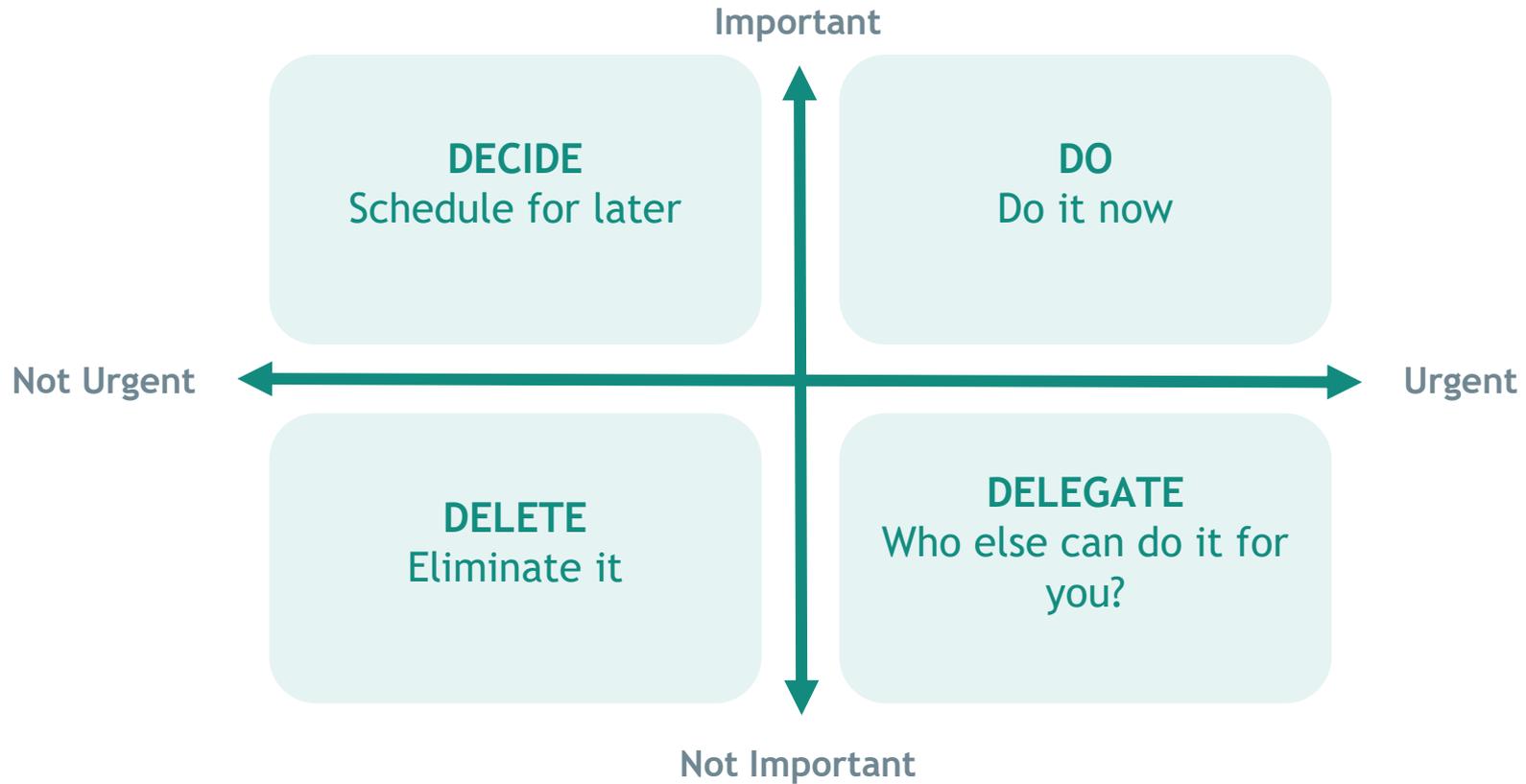
**Breathing  
techniques**

**Mindfulness**

# Why are stress management techniques beneficial?



# Task management - Eisenhower Matrix



# How does communication impact the psychological wellbeing of a team?

Communication skills not only affect the quality of collaboration but also the team's psychological resilience. In an environment based on trust, openness, and mutual respect, it is easier to prevent burnout and a decline in motivation.

(Wang, 2024)

## Why is communication in an organisation so important?

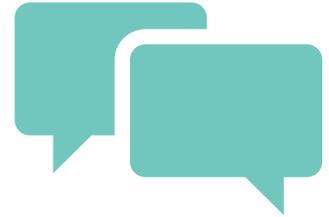
Improves  
teamwork  
quality

Effective  
communicators  
spot issues

Supports  
innovation  
and creative  
thinking

Builds team  
cohesion and  
a sense of  
belonging

Increases job  
satisfaction and  
engagement



# Building a culture of openness and trust

- Psychological safety is the climate within a team where every member feels comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and taking risks - without fear of criticism or rejection.

People are not afraid to admit mistakes.

They can openly express opinions, including critical ones.

They have a sense of belonging and influence.

## What are the benefits?

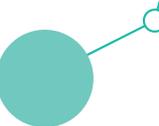
Teams with a high level of psychological safety are more likely to implement innovations and adapt more quickly to changes.

The greater  
the sense of  
safety

The better the quality  
of communication

The better the  
communication

The greater the  
chances for creative  
ideas, knowledge  
sharing, and successful  
implementation



# Three pillars of psychological safety supporting communication

## Collaboration and understanding

- Building a common language and intentions.
- Accepting even "immature" ideas.
  - Openness to diverse thinking styles.

## Sharing information

- Absence of knowledge silos.
- Free exchange of information between departments and individuals.
- Transparency in actions.

## Balance of giving and taking

- Reciprocity: everyone has the right and responsibility to speak up.
- Fair recognition of contributions.
- Job satisfaction and satisfaction in relationships.

# Supportive communication



Clarity of message, active listening, empathy, openness to differences.

Examples of messages: "I care about your opinion", "How can we solve this together?"

**Effects: Better coordination, increased engagement, team cohesion**

# Stress-inducing communication

Judgmental tone, one-sidedness, lack of recognition for differences, avoiding difficult conversations.

**Effects: Better coordination, increased engagement, team cohesion**

*Good feedback involves a precise reference to specific behaviour, its consequences, and developmental potential.*

# Good practices in daily communication

## Specificity

- Refer to facts, not interpretations.

## Impact

- Show the effect of the action on the team, client, or work outcome.

## Alternatives

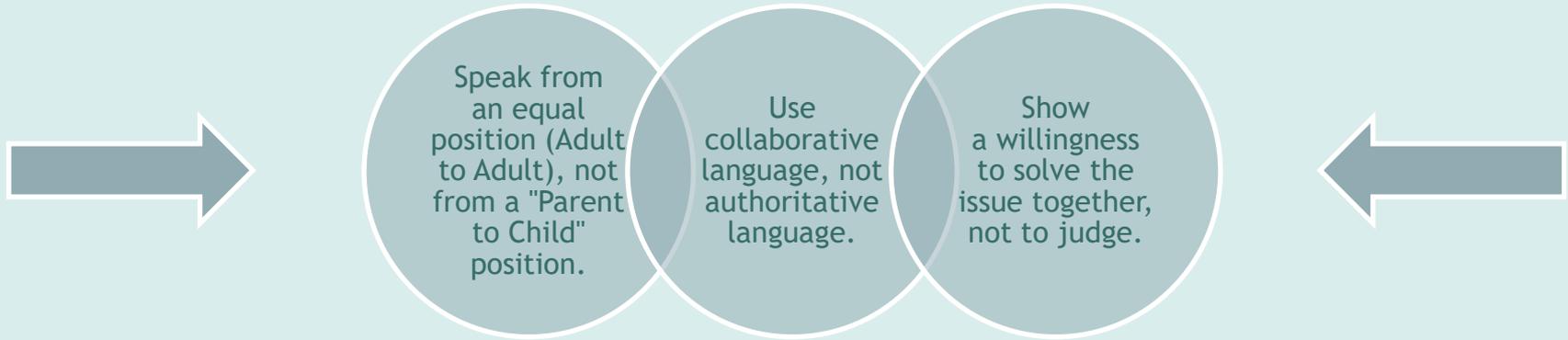
- Offer a direction for change, not as an order, but as a suggestion to consider.

**Reinforcing feedback**  
- used to reinforce positive behaviour.

**vs.**

**Corrective feedback**  
- used when something needs to be changed.

## How to give feedback without triggering resistance?



---

## When and how often should you give feedback?

- On an ongoing basis - don't wait until the "annual review."
- At a neutral time and place - not in a stressful situation or publicly (especially if it's corrective feedback).
- With empathy - adapt your communication style to the person: some prefer specifics, others need more emotional support.

# How to talk about difficulties, emotions, and needs?

## Supervisor-Employee Relationship

- Ask open-ended questions ("What has been the most overwhelming for you lately?").
- Avoid judging, and provide space for the person to speak.
- Offer specific support: "How can I help you?", "What can we change?"

## Employee-Employee Relationship

- Foster a climate of support, not competition.
- Observe non-verbal cues and respond with empathy.
- Short, honest conversations can have a significant impact on the atmosphere.

Relational communication patterns - such as support, humour, understanding - promote team effectiveness and protect against burnout.

# Structure, autonomy, shared goals and team rituals

A supportive environment is not only about relationships but also about the daily framework for action:

## Structure:

Clear division of roles, expectations and goals - reduces uncertainty and frustration

## Autonomy:

The ability to influence how tasks are carried out supports a sense of agency

## Shared goals:

Team goals should be clearly defined and linked to the organisation's mission - this increases motivation and a sense of purpose

## Team rituals:

Regular elements of collective action  
- check-ins, summaries, 1:1 meetings - strengthen regular communication and create space to express needs





# Summary and personal reflection

---

Exercise



---

What am I taking with me?

# Burnout assessment tools

BURNOUT PREVENT

## B-SA

Self- assessment of individual  
risk of burnout

Contains practical  
recommendations and tips  
dedicated to individual results

## COR-SA (E) & (M)

Identification of organisational  
burnout risk factors from  
employees' and managers'  
perspective

Accessible manual with  
detailed instructions for use  
and practical  
recommendations



B-SA

## - online version

Available EU-wide in English - for the participants of this training we can share the [native language] version

Completion takes around 5 minutes

After getting the score you immediately get suited recommendations

---

For the link, please, contact:  
[abcd@efg.com](mailto:abcd@efg.com)

# Satisfactory form



**Interreg**  
CENTRAL EUROPE



Co-funded by  
the European Union

**BURNOUT PREVENT**

Thank you all so much for the participation.

We are asking you to complete a short satisfactory questionnaire to help us...

## What are COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M)?

COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) are tools developed within the framework of the Interreg Central Europe - Burnout Prevent project. They are used to identify psychosocial risk factors for burnout and assess their frequency of occurrence - from the perspective of employees (E) and management (M).

Unfair Treatment  
and  
Compensation

Role Ambiguity

Lack of Control  
Over Work

Poor  
Communication  
and Lack of  
Support

Unjustified  
Pressure

Value  
Inconsistency

Discrimination

Work-Life  
Conflict

Technological  
Stress

9 key areas related to the risk of occupational burnout

# COR-SA (E)

	Symptoms/indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I receive the recognition I deserve for my work.					
2	Considering all my efforts and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately.					
3	Compared to my colleagues, I have inadequate amount of work responsibilities.					
4	The expectations placed on me at work are not clear.					
5	My workplace lacks clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					
6	I'm unsure about how my role contributes to the overall goals of my company.					
7	I perform my work tasks in my preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					

Symptoms/indicators

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Always

8

My work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.

9

I can have influence on the decisions related to my work in the company.

10

I receive support if I encounter difficulties with my tasks.

11

It is hard for me to communicate with my supervisors when it's needed.

12

Communication with my associates is insufficient.

13

Excessive duties force me to maintain a high working pace.

14

I'm unable to use all of my vacation days because of my work responsibilities.

	Symptoms/indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
15	I feel time and/or performance pressure.					
16	I have to make decisions that do not align with my beliefs and values.					
17	I do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18	I think my work contributes to something meaningful.					
19	My superiors and my colleagues communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					
20	My clients/patients/customers communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					
21	I feel discriminated at work (because of my gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					

	Symptoms/indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
22	My work negatively affects my private life.					
23	It is expected to work overtime in my workplace.					
24	I have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying to texts and phone calls) with my workplace even in my free time.					
25	I feel the pressure not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes in my workplace.					
26	In my workplace, there is a lack of training that would help me adapt to modern technologies.					
27	I fear that modern technologies could easily replace me in my job.					

# COR-SA (M)

Symptoms/indicators		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	The employees receive the recognition they deserve for their work.					
2	Considering all their efforts and achievements in their job, I feel that the employees get paid appropriately.					
3	The responsibilities are fairly divided among the employees.					
4	I make sure that my expectations are clear to the employees.					
5	In our company we follow clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					
6	I make sure that the employees are aware of how their role contributes to the overall goals of the company.					
7	The employees perform their work tasks in their own preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					

Symptoms/indicators		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
8	The employees' work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.					
9	The employees can have influence on the decisions associated with their work.					
10	The employees receive support if they encounter difficulties with their tasks.					
11	I try to make it easy for the employees to reach to me when they need it.					
12	Communication between the employees is insufficient.					
13	Excessive duties force the employees to maintain a high working pace.					
14	The employees are unable to use all of their vacation days because of work responsibilities.					

	Symptoms/indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
15	There is a culture of racing in my company.					
16	The employees have to make decisions that do not align with their beliefs and values.					
17	The employees do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18	I try to emphasize how the employees' work contributes to something meaningful.					
19	In my company people communicate with each other in an uncivilised manner.					
20	Clients/patients/customers communicate with the employees in an uncivilised manner.					
21	The employees experience discrimination at work (because of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					

	Symptoms/indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
22	I observe that the employees' work negatively affects their personal lives.					
23	The employees are expected to work overtime.					
24	The employees have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying to texts and phone calls) with their workplace even in their free time.					
25	There is a pressure among the employees not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes.					
26	The employees complain about the lack of training that would help them adapt to modern technologies.					
27	Modern technologies are seen by the employees as a threat to their job security.					

## How to Interpret the Results?

Responses to the questions are given on a five-point scale, including the answers: never, rarely, sometimes, often, always. Each response is assigned a specific number of points. The points are then summed up to give an overall result, which should be compared to established intervals to provide appropriate recommendations.

In **COR-SA (E)** and **COR-SA (M)**, a rating scale from 0 to 4 points is used to assess the frequency of specific situations in the workplace as perceived by employees/managers. The questions address both potentially detrimental conditions (e.g., work overload, role ambiguity) and positive organizational aspects (e.g., recognition, engagement, and support).

Therefore, the items are scored in different ways. For some statements, a higher score indicates a greater intensity of difficulties, while for others, a higher score reflects a greater frequency of positive phenomena occurring in the workplace.

In the manuals, tables are provided with the points that should be assigned to each answer in the respective questions. After calculating the scores for each question (taking into account the reversed scale where applicable), the individual points should be summed up and compared with the intervals that indicate specific recommendations.

COR-SA (E) applies a 0-4-point scale that enables employees to assess how often specific situations occur in their workplace.

The items address both potentially harmful conditions (e.g. overload, unclear roles) and positive organisational aspects (e.g. recognition, engagement, support).

Therefore, items are scored differently depending on their nature:

For negative statements, a **higher score indicates more frequent difficulties.**

For positive statements, a **higher score reflects more frequent positive experiences.**

## COR-SA (E) Scoring

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	0 points
RARELY	1 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	3 points
ALWAYS	4 points

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	4 points
RARELY	3 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	1 points
ALWAYS	0 points

**This scale applies to the following questions:**

3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

In questions numbered 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, and 18, a reverse scoring scale is applied

# COR-SA (M) Scoring

In the COR-SA (M) tool, a 0 to 4-point scale is used to help managers assess how frequently specific situations occur within their teams. The questions address both potentially unfavourable conditions (e.g. unfair treatment, lack of role clarity) and positive organisational aspects (e.g. effective communication, support, alignment of values).

Because of this, the items are scored in two different ways:

For some statements, a higher score indicates greater intensity of difficulty.

For others, a higher score reflects the more frequent presence of positive factors in the team.

---

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	0 points
RARELY	1 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	3 points
ALWAYS	4 points

---

---

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	4 points
RARELY	3 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	1 points
ALWAYS	0 points

---

This scoring scale applies to the following questions: 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27.

For questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 18, reverse scoring is applied

## Score calculation form



Each of the Problem areas contain 3 statements



After calculating the score for each individual Area add them to get the General Score



Pay attention to the statements that are scored in reverse

Statement n°	Point Value	Total	Problem Area
1.			<i>Unfair treatment and remuneration</i>
2.			
3.			
4.			<i>Role ambiguity</i>
5.			
6.			
7.			<i>Lack of control over work</i>
8.			
9.			
10.			<i>Poor communication and lack of support</i>
11.			
12.			
13.			<i>Unjustified pressure</i>
14.			
15.			
16.			<i>Value misalignment</i>
17.			
18.			
19.			<i>Discrimination</i>
20.			
21.			
22.			<i>Work-life conflict</i>
23.			
24.			
25.			<i>Technostress</i>
26.			
27.			

**DISCLAIMER: REVERSE SCORING APPLIES TO SOME OF THE STATEMENTS**

*General score*

# Recommendations

Both tools should be performed simultaneously, and the scores must be compared.

Even if the scores are low - don't hesitate to check the problem area overviews - tool guide contains suited recommendations for each problem area regarding organisational action and showing some ways in which you can show support to the employees.

**Example:** Both COR-SA scores are similar, <9 points

Problem area overview indicates higher scores in Work-Life conflict

High scores suggest difficulty in balancing job demands with personal life. When this area is problematic, employees' fatigue and resentment can grow quickly.

Check the fitted recommendations for organizational action, for example:  
Encourage respect for personal time, for example by avoiding after-hours communication

See how can you directly support the employees, for example: Be open to discussing workload adjustments if personal responsibilities affect availability

# How to effectively manage psychosocial risk

## Stage 1: Risk Assessment

- Start with identifying what helps and what hinders the employees' daily work. Each team is different, so ask open questions like: What works well?; What gets in the way?; What needs to change? Don't hesitate to use COR-SA tool at this stage

## Stage 2: Action planning

- After identifying key stressors, plan specific, realistic actions tailored to your team. Focus on clear, doable steps.

## Stage 3: Implementation

- Change starts with small, consistent steps that truly address team needs. Focus on the improvements that reduce stress and strengthen resources.

## Stage 4: Evaluation

- After some time, assess whether the actions made a real difference. Evaluation helps recognise what works, fine-tune what doesn't, and builds trust by showing the effort was worthwhile.

## Stage 5: Organisational learning

- Focus not only on solving problems but also on strengthening what works. Embedding good practices turns risk management into a lasting part of team culture and supports continuous learning and growth. Evaluation is the beginning of ongoing improvement.

**BURNOUT PREVENT**

# Training scenario

Understanding and Preventing Occupational Burnout in the Workplace



Version 1  
06 2025





## Introduction

**Duration:** 6 hours

**Format:** 2 in-person sessions and 1 online session

**Group:** Mixed - managers and employees

All the guidelines provided here are indicative and intended as suggestions to support the flow of the training - they should be treated flexibly, adapted and adjusted to your own working style, organisational conditions, and the specific needs of the group. There is no need to follow them rigidly - the most important thing is to stay aligned with the training objectives and respond to participants' needs.

### SLIDE 2 Introduction to the topic

**Facilitator tips:** At the start of the training, it is useful to display the slide with the schedule and go through the plan for the day together with participants. You can explain how many modules the training includes, how long each part will last, and when the breaks are planned. It is also a good idea to briefly describe the nature of each stage - for example, that the opening section will be more lecture-based, while the following parts will be more practical or workshop-style.

It is helpful to speak in terms of benefits, showing participants what they can expect and how they might prepare for each element of the session.

After presenting the schedule, you can invite participants to ask questions. A short 5-minute space for clarifying doubts or adding comments often works well - for instance, "If you have any questions about the structure of the training, now is a good time to ask."



## Module 1 - Occupational burnout

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 10-minute break

**Objective:** to build a shared understanding of occupational burnout, its symptoms, causes, and consequences - both at the individual and organisational level

**Format:** interactive lecture

### SLIDE 3 Occupational burnout - mind map

**QR code/link to Kahoot or Mentimeter** (remember to print out the code, as not all participants will be able to scan it from the projector). You can also use paper cards as an alternative.

**Facilitator tips:** At the beginning of the module, it is worth offering participants a short activity based on sharing associations with the term *occupational burnout*. This exercise helps to actively engage the group and gives the facilitator an initial insight into how participants perceive the phenomenon. It also serves as a good starting point for further discussion and helps to build a sense of shared ownership in creating a reflective learning space.

### SLIDE 4 What is occupational burnout and why is it important to understand it?

**What is burnout:** *“Burnout is a persistent, negative work-related state that occurs in generally healthy individuals. It is primarily characterised by exhaustion, accompanied by psychological and physical discomfort, a sense of reduced effectiveness, lowered motivation, and dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work. This state develops gradually and results from a mismatch between professional intentions and occupational realities. Burnout is often a self-perpetuating process due to inadequate coping strategies.”* (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998)

**Facilitator tips: how to explain the definition of occupational burnout in accessible language**

When discussing the definition of occupational burnout, it is helpful to use everyday language and avoid overloading participants with academic terminology. The aim is not to recite the definition but to present it in a way that makes it easy for participants to relate it to their own experiences.

You could say, for example:

*“Occupational burnout is a state of prolonged exhaustion - both mental and physical - that affects people who otherwise function normally in their daily lives. It tends to appear when we’ve been engaged in our work for a long time, but the outcomes aren’t what we expected or hoped for. We begin to feel tired, lose motivation, and experience a sense of meaninglessness. Over time, we may also start behaving differently at work - with reluctance, detachment, or indifference. This state does not appear suddenly - it builds up slowly and is often difficult to notice on our own, especially if we try to cope in ways that only make things worse.”*



## BURNOUT PREVENT

You can encourage participants to share which of these elements feel familiar to them - not as a diagnosis, but as a point of reference.

A suggested question for the group: *“Does anything in this description sound familiar - either in your own experience or in someone close to you?”*. This approach helps translate scientific content into the language of personal experience and opens up space for deeper, more engaging conversation.

### Why is it important to become familiar with the topic of occupational burnout?

- Occupational burnout is a key indicator of declining employee health caused by work-related strain.
- It is a significant predictor of deteriorating physical health (e.g. musculoskeletal complaints) as well as mental health (e.g. depression, sleep difficulties).
- It increases the likelihood of engaging in behaviours that are harmful to health.
- It can contribute to reduced work quality, increased absenteeism, or even incapacity for work.

(Basińska, Gruszczyńska, Schaufeli, 2023)

### SLIDE 5 Symptoms of burnout

Emotional domain	a sense of being overwhelmed, lack of drive or initiative, loss of motivation, cynicism or a negative attitude towards work
Physical domain	low energy or persistent fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, sleep difficulties, stomach problems or digestive issues
Social domain	avoiding social interactions, frequent conflicts with others, lack of patience, reluctance to arrange meetings or appointments

#### Emotional symptoms of occupational burnout:

Individuals experiencing burnout often feel overwhelmed and drained, with no energy or desire to take action. They may suffer from a lack of motivation, which leads to feelings of helplessness. Work stops being satisfying, and their attitude towards both tasks and colleagues becomes indifferent or even negative. A sense of meaninglessness and disengagement from responsibilities may also appear.

#### Physical symptoms:

Burnout can also manifest physically - through chronic fatigue and a persistent lack of energy that interferes with everyday functioning. Common complaints include muscle pain, particularly in the neck, back and shoulders, frequent headaches, and digestive issues such as heartburn, constipation or indigestion. Sleep disturbances and lowered immunity are also typical, making individuals more prone to infections and colds.



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

**Social symptoms:**

Those affected by burnout often experience increasing discouragement - both towards their work and the people they work with. They begin to withdraw and avoid contact with others, including in their private lives. Patience and kindness towards clients or colleagues may decline - this may show in behaviours such as postponing meetings, not answering calls, or avoiding visits. Burnout can also affect family and marital relationships, leading to tension and difficulties in close connections. (Kozłowska, 2013)

**SLIDE 6 Stages of occupational burnout**

The model developed by Miller and Smith (1993) identifies five successive stages of occupational burnout. This breakdown helps to better understand the dynamics of the phenomenon - from initial engagement and enthusiasm, through gradual exhaustion, to full burnout and, in some cases, eventual recovery.

Stage of burnout	Characteristics	Symptoms	Attitudes and behaviours
<b>1. Honeymoon</b>	A phase of enthusiasm, high motivation and strong engagement	Optimism, confidence in one's abilities, satisfaction with achievements	Taking on many tasks, feeling fulfilled and finding meaning in one's work
<b>2. Awakening</b>	A growing mismatch between the idealised image of the role and the reality	Feeling overwhelmed, disappointment, psychosomatic symptoms: fatigue, headaches, sleep difficulties	Intensifying effort in order to maintain previous performance
<b>3. Irritability</b>	Decline in the quality of relationships, emotional detachment and aversion	Irritability, indifference, detachment, reluctance, stress-related symptoms (e.g. stomach pains)	Conflicts with others, growing resentment towards clients
<b>4. Full burnout</b>	Physical and psychological exhaustion caused by work	Loss of motivation, feeling out of control, cynicism, depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue	Significant drop in effectiveness, social withdrawal



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

<b>5. Renewal</b>	A phase of restoring balance, reflection and renewed hope	Gradual recovery of physical and psychological resources	Seeking and accepting support, rest and regeneration, developing new coping strategies
-------------------	---	--	--

**1. Honeymoon phase - the stage of enthusiasm**

This initial stage can resemble the feeling of being in love. At this point, the employee experiences high levels of motivation, energy, and satisfaction from their achievements. There is a strong belief in their ability to realise their full potential, and everyday tasks are approached with great engagement. This phase is marked by a positive attitude and a strong sense of professional fulfilment.

**2. Awakening phase - a “reality check”**

As time goes on, the first signs of strain begin to appear. Fatigue sets in, and maintaining previous levels of effectiveness requires increasing effort. The individual may begin to push beyond their limits, striving to uphold the image of the "ideal employee" - despite the emotional toll it takes.

**3. Irritability phase**

At this stage, the quality of interpersonal relationships begins to deteriorate. Difficulties in communication with colleagues and clients become more noticeable, and completing everyday tasks requires even more energy. This can lead to poor communication and increased stress levels, negatively impacting both work comfort and emotional wellbeing.

*Example: “The employee begins to treat clients as ‘just another case to deal with’, with no emotional connection or engagement.”*

**4. Full burnout phase**

This is the ultimate result of accumulated overload, manifesting as both physical and mental exhaustion. Individuals in this phase may experience chronic fatigue, reduced performance, and a tendency to isolate themselves. Characteristic symptoms include a loss of motivation and a feeling of no longer being in control of their professional situation.

**5. Apathy**

**Final stage of occupational burnout - neglecting the symptoms of burnout leads to extreme physical and mental exhaustion.**

**\*Renewal**

Despite the intensity of all of the stages, occupational burnout does not have to be irreversible. The recovery phase may occur after each of the stages and lead to restoring balance.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

**Coping strategies** play a key role - including social support, regular rest, and implementing coping mechanisms. This phase enables individuals to redefine their relationship with work and gradually rebuild their psychological and physical resources.

(Nuallaong, 2012)

### [OPTIONAL EXERCISE]

In the small groups, describe a typical working day morning (eg. Tuesday morning) of the following individuals. How would they feel, behave after waking up?

Gr 1: Lisa 27 yo, resident doctor in the Honeymoon stage

Gr 2: Paul 32 yo, IT expert in the Awakening stage

Gr 3: Erica a 47 years old teacher in the Irritability stage

Gr 4: George 55 years old engineer in the Total burnout stage

## SLIDE 7 Causes of burnout - individual, team and organisational

### Facilitator tips:

This part of the training can begin by introducing a key principle: occupational burnout is the result of the interaction between individual, team and organisational factors. Due to natural differences between people, some individuals - because of certain traits - may be more vulnerable to developing burnout. This can serve as a useful introduction to the next section of the module, where the potential causes of burnout will be discussed.

Before presenting those causes, it may be helpful to begin with a short association-based activity involving participants. You could ask:

*“What causes of occupational burnout come to mind if you were to name them without any prompts? What factors - either on the employee’s side or within the organisation - would you consider the most common sources of burnout?”*

Depending on the format of the training, responses can be collected orally, on paper, on a flipchart, or through interactive tools such as Mentimeter or Kahoot. This approach encourages engagement and helps participants explore their own understanding of the topic before theoretical content is introduced.

It is worth emphasising that this is not about providing textbook definitions, but about spontaneous associations, observations, and experiences - which often become a valuable starting point for deeper and more meaningful discussion.

### Individual causes of occupational burnout

1. **High empathy and the need to help others** - Individuals with a strong sense of empathy are more prone to burnout. High empathy is associated with emotional exhaustion. (Williams, 1998)
2. **Neuroticism** - Neuroticism is linked to emotional exhaustion, one of the core symptoms of occupational burnout. (Sadoughi, 2017)
3. **Chronic stress** - Freudenberger (1974) described occupational burnout as a result of chronic stress that has not been effectively managed.
4. **Work-life balance** - Employees who do not maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life are more likely to experience burnout. (Tugsal, 2017)



## BURNOUT PREVENT

### Team causes of occupational burnout

- **Undefined or imprecisely defined responsibilities and competencies** among team members
- **Poor level of communication** with colleagues
- **Lack of mutual support**
- **Competition and rivalry instead of collaboration** of the team

### Organisational causes of occupational burnout

- **Workload** - excessive responsibilities, high task load, time pressure.
- **Control** - lack of involvement in decision-making, ineffective leadership, feeling powerless.
- **Reward** - lack of recognition, inadequate compensation, low job satisfaction.
- **Community** - poor communication, lack of support from colleagues or managers.
- **Fairness** - perceived injustice, unequal treatment of employees.
- **Values** - a mismatch between an employee's personal values and those of the organisation.  
(Leiter, Maslach, 2004).

## SLIDE 8 Consequences of occupational burnout for the employee and the organisation

### Facilitator tip - discussing the consequences of occupational burnout + question for participants

This part of the training can begin with a simple introduction that highlights burnout as more than just an individual issue - it is a phenomenon that affects the entire work ecosystem. The facilitator can start by explaining that burnout is a state that develops as a result of prolonged work-related stress. It does not only impact the person experiencing it - its effects can also be seen within the team and even across the whole organisation.

Following this introduction, it is helpful to pose a question that encourages participants to reflect on their own observations and experiences:

**“What consequences of occupational burnout come to mind - both for the individual employee and for the wider team or organisation? What might you notice when burnout begins to appear in the workplace?”**

Participants can respond verbally, anonymously (e.g. via Mentimeter), or on paper. This question is a good way to open the space for the next part of the module, in which specific consequences of burnout at different levels are explored.

### Consequences for the employee

Occupational burnout leads to serious disruptions in an employee's psychological and physical functioning. It may result in:

- **Emotional exhaustion, chronic fatigue, and lack of energy:** Burnout is strongly associated with ongoing emotional depletion and the inability to recharge. (Maslach & Leiter, 2004)
- **Physical health problems:** Burnout may cause a range of physical health issues, including persistent fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, and even more serious conditions such as cardiovascular disease and weakened immune function. (Channawar, 2023)



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- **Mental health problems:** Burnout is closely linked to mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety. (Channawar, 2023)
- **Reduced job satisfaction:** Burnout often leads to lower job satisfaction, which can create a negative feedback loop, further deepening the experience of burnout. (Channawar, 2023)

### Consequences for the organisation

- **Decreased work performance:** Burnout can significantly reduce performance levels. It often results in lower productivity, increased errors, and difficulties with maintaining concentration. (Channawar, 2023)
- **Increased absenteeism:** Burnout may lead to more frequent absences, as employees take time off to recover from physical and emotional exhaustion. (Channawar, 2023)
- **Lower organisational commitment:** Employees experiencing burnout are more likely to disengage from their work and feel less committed to their organisation. (Channawar, 2023)
- **Financial costs:** Burnout generates substantial costs for organisations - including reduced productivity, higher healthcare expenses, and the costs of recruiting and training replacement staff. (Channawar, 2023)
- **High job turnover:** Employees' disengagement can lead to higher job turnover. (Channawar, 2023)

### Sources:

1. Schaufeli, W., Enzmann, D. (1998). *The burnout companion to study and practice - a critical analysis*. London: Taylor & Francis.
2. Basińska, B., Gruszczyńska, E., Schaufeli, W. (2023). The Polish adaptation of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT-PL). *Psychiatria Polska*, 57(1), 223-235.
3. Miller, L. H, Smith, A. D. (1993). *The stress solution: an action plan to manage the stress in your life*. New York: Pocket Books.
4. Nuallaong, W. (2012). Burnout Symptoms and Cycles of Burnout: The Comparison with Psychiatric Disorders and Aspects of Approaches. *Burnout for Experts*, 47-72. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-4391-9\_4
5. Williams, C. A. (1989). Empathy and burnout in male and female helping professionals. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 12(3), 169-178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770120307>



BURNOUT PREVENT

6. Leiter, M., Maslach, C. (2004). Areas of Worklife: a structured approach to organizational predictors of job burnout. *Research in occupational health and well-being*, 3, 91-134. DOI: 10.1016/S1479-3555(03)03003-8
7. Sadoughi, M. (2017). The relationship between personality traits, perfectionism and job burnout: the case of iranian high school teachers. *International Journal of Academic research in progressive Education and Development*, 6(10), 1-10.
8. Freudenberger, H. (1974). Staff burnout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30(1), 159-165. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1974.tb00706.x
9. Tugsal, T. (2017). Work life balance and social support as predictors of burnout: an exploratory analysis. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 117-138. DOI: 10.6007/ijarbss/v7-i3/2699
10. Channawar, S. (2023). A study on the cause and effect of burnout. *History Research Journal*, 26(06), 75-79.



## Module 2 - Psychosocial risks in the workplace

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 15-minute break

**Objective:** to increase participants' awareness of psychosocial risks in the workplace and their impact on psychological well-being

**Format:** interactive lecture

### SLIDE 9 What are psychosocial risks?

These include, for example, the pace of work, level of control over tasks, relationships with supervisors and colleagues, job security, and opportunities for development.

These factors are not inherently good or bad - it is our perception of them that determines whether they support our well-being or become a source of stress. For one person, a heavy workload may be a motivating challenge; for another, it may lead to burnout and frustration.

Psychosocial hazards may be defined as “those aspects of work design and the organisation and management of work, and their social and environmental contexts, which have the potential for causing psychological, social or physical harm”.

#### Facilitator tip - explaining the difference between a psychosocial factor and a psychosocial risk + question for participants

At this point in the training, it is useful to draw participants' attention to an important but often overlooked distinction - the difference between a *psychosocial factor* and a *psychosocial risk*. This is crucial, as not every factor present in the work environment automatically poses a risk - its impact depends on how it is perceived and processed by the individual employee.

You can begin by explaining that not every aspect of the work environment - even those involving high demands - is inherently harmful. A psychosocial factor becomes a *risk* when it is experienced as stressful by the employee. This perception is shaped by individual characteristics such as personality traits, life experiences, resilience, and coping skills.

After this introduction, you may ask a question to help participants understand the mechanism more clearly and relate it to everyday work situations:

**“Can you think of a work situation that might be a motivating challenge for one person but a stressful risk for another? What factors could influence that difference?”**

### SLIDE 10 Types of psychosocial occupational risks

#### Introduction for participants - classification of psychosocial risks according to Cox

Although there are many ways to classify psychosocial risks at work, we will focus on one of the most practical and clearly structured approaches - the classification proposed by Cox and colleagues (2000).

This model divides psychosocial risks into two main categories: those related to the *content* of work and those related to its *context*.

- **Work content factors** (sometimes referred to as “hard” factors) are directly related to the nature of the work itself - what we do, how much we have to do, how fast we need to complete tasks, and under what conditions (e.g. night shifts, irregular schedules). Examples include excessive workload, monotonous tasks, or intense work pace.
- **Work context factors** (also referred to as “soft” or “background” factors) relate to the broader environment in which work is performed. These include management style, relationships with



## BURNOUT PREVENT

colleagues and supervisors, opportunities for development, the general workplace atmosphere, or challenges in maintaining work-life balance.

Understanding these two categories helps us more clearly identify what aspects of our job might be stressful - and what could be improved to create a healthier and more supportive working environment.

**Psychosocial risks related to the content of work include:**

- Work environment and equipment - e.g. issues related to accessibility, suitability, maintenance, or repair of tools and machinery
- Task design - e.g. lack of variety or very short work cycles, highly fragmented or meaningless work, underuse of skills, high levels of uncertainty
- Workload and pace of work - e.g. work overload or underload, lack of control over work pace, intense time pressure
- Work schedule - e.g. shift work, inflexible working hours, unpredictable work patterns

**Examples of stress-inducing work context factors include:**

- **Organisational culture and functioning** - e.g. poor communication, low levels of support for problem-solving and personal development, lack of clearly defined organisational goals
- **Role within the organisation** - e.g. role ambiguity or role conflict
- **Career development** - e.g. career stagnation or uncertainty, lack of promotion or promotion beyond one's capacity, low pay, job insecurity, low social recognition of one's work
- **Decision-making and control** - e.g. limited participation in decision-making, lack of control over one's work
- **Interpersonal relationships at work** - e.g. social or physical isolation, poor relationships with supervisors, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support
- **Work-home interface** - e.g. conflicting demands from work and home, low support from family, dual-career strain

**Suggested practical examples that can be used to better explain each risk to participants:**

Work content factors (the "hard" / task-related aspects of work)

1. **Inadequate workstation**
  - ▶ The employee doesn't have a functioning computer or sits in an uncomfortable chair. Equipment breaks down frequently, delaying tasks and causing frustration.
2. **Monotonous work**
  - ▶ Every day for eight hours, they do exactly the same thing - for example, entering data into a system with no interaction with others or variety in the tasks.
3. **Excessive work pace**
  - ▶ New tasks "appear out of nowhere" every hour, yet everything is expected to be completed on time. The employee has no time for breaks or even a moment to breathe.
4. **Irregular work schedule**
  - ▶ The shift plan changes daily - morning today, night tomorrow, afternoon the next day. It becomes nearly impossible to plan personal life or rest.

Work context factors (the "soft" / background elements of work)

1. **Poor team communication**



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- ▶ Employees don't know exactly what they're supposed to do, and information is passed on in a chaotic way - for example, project priorities are changed without prior notice.
- 2. **Role ambiguity**
  - ▶ An employee is unsure of who is responsible for what - they feel like "everything is on their shoulders", but no one has confirmed it. As a result, they constantly worry that something will be overlooked.
- 3. **Lack of career prospects**
  - ▶ Someone has been in the same role for years, with no chance for promotion, a pay rise, or professional development.
- 4. **Lack of influence over decisions**
  - ▶ The employee is assigned tasks without any consultation or input - everything is decided in advance, regardless of their knowledge or experience.
- 5. **Team conflict**
  - ▶ Colleagues avoid each other, tensions are frequent, and the manager doesn't intervene. Working in such an atmosphere becomes a constant source of stress.
- 6. **Work-life imbalance**
  - ▶ The employee receives emails and phone calls in the evenings and is expected to respond.

### SLIDE 11 New technologies - risks and concerns

When discussing psychosocial risks in the workplace, it is impossible to ignore the challenges posed by new technologies.

Automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence are transforming how work is carried out - often increasing the pace, reducing employees' sense of control, and even triggering anxiety about their place within the team.

The term *technostress* was introduced in the 1980s (Brod, 1984) and described as a modern adjustment disorder caused by difficulties in coping with emerging computer technologies. Research has shown that technostress is associated with chronic anxiety, fatigue, and reduced self-efficacy (Salanova et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Kumar et al. (2013) argue that technostress lowers job satisfaction and employee engagement. As a result, it can lead to more negative self-evaluations of one's work.

Given the negative effects of technostress on both individuals and organisations, it is important for employers to provide tools that support employees in managing this issue. Effective technical support and matching technology to the specific requirements of the task have proven helpful. To reduce technostress, organisations should also regularly assess whether the systems and tools in use actually meet employees' needs (Ayyagari, 2012).

#### Facilitator tip:

You can ask participants the following question: "Have new technologies in your workplace brought more ease or more stress? What has your experience with them been like?"

#### [OPTIONAL EXERCISE]

Start an open discussion about concerns considering new technologies in the participants' own field. What are they afraid of? What kind of challenges do they see?

The trainer makes notes on whiteboard/flipchart and summarizes the topic.



## SLIDE 12 Psychosocial risks and occupational burnout

Occupational burnout is often linked to the presence of various psychosocial risks in the workplace.

Research highlights the connection between burnout and a wide range of factors, both organisational and individual in nature. In terms of the work environment, key challenges may include:

- **Communication problems and conflicts** - unclear flow of information and tense relationships between colleagues can intensify frustration
- **Role ambiguity** - when an employee is unsure of their responsibilities or faces conflicting tasks
- **Unfair reward systems** - the feeling that one's effort and commitment are not reflected in recognition or fair compensation
- **Excessive time pressure and overtime** - the constant feeling of chasing deadlines leads to chronic fatigue
- **Lack of control over one's work** - limited autonomy in planning tasks or influencing organisational decisions
- **Value conflict** - a mismatch between personal values and the company's culture weakens engagement (*Ozturk, 2020*)

## SLIDE 13 Consequences of psychosocial risks for the employee and the organisation

**Facilitator tip:** In this part of the training, it is important to emphasise that psychosocial risks do not affect only the individual employee - they also have real consequences for the entire organisation. Chronic stress impacts not only health, but also productivity, team atmosphere, and overall operational costs.

Effects of work-related stress on the employee

### Physiological effects (short-term):

- a) Muscular symptoms - e.g. tension in the neck, back, clenched jaw
- b) Respiratory symptoms - e.g. rapid or shallow breathing
- c) Pain - e.g. headaches, back pain, neck pain
- d) Digestive reactions - e.g. diarrhea or constipation
- e) Other - e.g. nervous movements, scratching, flushed skin, teeth grinding

### Emotional and cognitive effects:

- Emotions: anxiety, fear, anger, hostility, isolation, mood swings, depression
- Cognition: memory problems, poor concentration, reduced objectivity and critical thinking, decreased creativity, difficulty making decisions



## BURNOUT PREVENT

### Decline in work quality and functioning

- Inconsistency and lack of uniformity in task performance
- Loss of control over one's work
- Decreased motivation and engagement
- Indecisiveness and instability
- Forgetfulness
- Extended time spent at work
- No holiday planning, unused leave
- Frequent lateness or leaving work early
- Taking longer breaks (e.g. lunch)
- Increased absenteeism
- Resignation or giving up
- Reduced interaction with others
- Avoiding contact, "disappearing"

### Regressive and emotionally immature behaviours

- Crying spells
- Excessive sensitivity and sulking
- Immature reactions
- Malicious gossip, criticising others
- Shouting, emotional outbursts
- Vandalism, destructive behaviour
- Communication difficulties, nervous or agitated speech

### Aggressive behaviour

- Arguments and quarrels
- Bullying (mobbing)
- Poor relationships with colleagues
- Explosive mood swings

### Other behaviours and side effects

- Increased alcohol consumption
- Higher number of cigarettes smoked
- Neglect of appearance and personal hygiene
- Accidents at work or at home
- Reckless driving
- Taking unnecessary risks

### Effects of work-related stress at the organisational level:

- Absenteeism
- High employee turnover
- High rate of sick leave
- Inefficient use of working time
- Decreased productivity
- Strikes or unrest
- Resistance to organisational change

## SLIDE 14 How to prevent psychosocial risks in the workplace?



## BURNOUT PREVENT

**Facilitator tip:** At this stage of the training, it is important to highlight that stress itself is not inherently negative - it can act as a signal for mobilisation and a natural reaction to challenges. The problem arises when stress becomes chronic, constant, and offers no opportunity for recovery.

It is worth emphasising that prolonged stress harms both individuals and organisations - which is why preventive action is so important.

In the following part of the session, participants will explore three levels of prevention, which illustrate how to gradually build a healthier working environment and respond more effectively to stress-related situations.

### What is psychosocial risk prevention?

Prevention refers to actions taken in advance to avoid or at least reduce the negative effects of psychosocial risks. The aim is to protect employees' health and improve the overall functioning of the organisation.

#### Three levels of prevention:

##### 1. Primary prevention - act before stress occurs

This level of prevention focuses on eliminating psychosocial risks before they arise, or - if they already exist - on reducing their negative impact on employees' health and wellbeing.

Example: good work organisation, clear rules, realistic expectations, and supportive team relationships.

##### 2. Secondary prevention - help manage existing stress

If it is not possible to remove psychosocial risks, it is important to equip employees with tools and skills that help them respond more effectively to stress and reduce its impact on their health.

Example: stress management training, better workload planning, supportive leadership.

##### 3. Tertiary prevention - respond when stress has already caused harm

This level of prevention involves actions taken once stress has already had a negative effect on the employee's health. It provides support to individuals who are struggling with the consequences of prolonged stress and helps them regain balance and return to full functioning at work.

Example: psychological counselling, flexible working hours, health and rehabilitation programmes. (Merecz et al., 2011)

### Why is it important to identify and eliminate psychosocial risks at work?

Psychosocial risks in the workplace are not always visible at first glance, but they have a very real impact on employees' health and the overall functioning of an organisation.

#### Why it's worth identifying and addressing them:

- **By protecting employees' mental and physical health**, we help prevent burnout, depression, anxiety disorders, and somatic health issues (e.g. heart disease, headaches, sleep disturbances).
- **We improve work efficiency and quality** - satisfied and calm employees work better, are more engaged, and make fewer mistakes.
- **We reduce costs related to absenteeism and staff turnover** - fewer sick leaves, less recruitment and onboarding of new employees.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- **We build a better team atmosphere and improve communication**, which reduces conflicts and strengthens collaboration.
- **We boost innovation and openness to change** - stress inhibits creativity, while a healthy work environment encourages it.
- **We meet legal and ethical obligations** - caring for employee health is not only good practice, it is also a responsibility of the employer.

### Facilitator tip:

To conclude, it is important to communicate that every prevention effort should begin with an assessment of psychosocial risks in the workplace. Gathering input from employees helps identify what they perceive as real sources of stress. Only then can we design effective actions tailored to the specific team or organisation.

A good practice at this point is to ask an open-ended question to the group:

**“In your opinion, how can psychosocial risks be assessed in the workplace?**

**What methods might work in your organisation?”**

## SLIDE 15 Group exercise: “Map of psychosocial risks and preventive actions”

### Objective of the exercise:

- To raise awareness among employees about the sources of psychosocial risks in their specific work environment
- To collaboratively develop possible preventive measures across all three levels of prevention
- To encourage the exchange of perspectives between employees and management

### Instructions for participants:

1. **Group division (4-6 people)**
2. **Phase 1 - Identifying risks (10 minutes)**

Each group creates a list of situations in their work environment that are or may become sources of stress.

- What aspects of everyday work are stressful?
- What negatively affects atmosphere, health, relationships, or motivation?

3. **Phase 2 - Prevention at three levels (10 minutes)**

The group selects 2-3 specific stress-related situations from the list and:

- Considers how they could be prevented (primary prevention)
- Suggests how employees can better cope with them (secondary prevention)
- Develops ideas for support if stress has already occurred and caused harm (tertiary prevention)

4. **Phase 3 - Summary and presentation (10 minutes)**

Each group presents their “stress map” and proposed actions.

The facilitator can write repeated risk factors and the most valuable ideas on a whiteboard or flipchart.



#### Materials needed:

- Sheets of paper (e.g. A3) or flipcharts
- Markers, coloured sticky notes
- Optional: templates divided into the three levels of prevention

#### Reflection questions (for the whole group):

- Which psychosocial risks came up most frequently?
- Were there any suggestions that could be implemented immediately?
- What can managers and employees each do to jointly reduce workplace stress?

#### Sources:

1. Ayyagari, R. Impact of information overload and task-technology fit on technostress. *In Proceedings of the Southern Association for Information Systems Conference*, Atlanta, GA, USA, 16 March 2012; pp. 18-22.
2. Craig Brod, *Technostress: The Human Cost of the Computer Revolution*, Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1984.
3. Cox, T., Griffiths, A., Rial-González, E. (2000). Research on work-related stress. *Luxembourg: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work*.
4. Kumar, R.; Lal, R.; Bansal, Y.; Sharma, S.K. Technostress in relation to job satisfaction and organisational commitment among IT professionals. *Int. J. Sci. Res. Publ.* **2013**, *3*, 1-3.
5. Merez, D. (2011). *Profilaktyka psychospołecznych zagrożeń w miejscu pracy - od teorii do praktyki*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Instytutu Medycyny Pracy im. Prof. J. Nofera.
6. Ozturk, Y. E. (2020). A theoretical review of burnout syndrome and perspectives on burnout models. *Bussecon Review of Social Sciences*, *2*(4).
7. Salanova, M.; Llorens, S.; Ventura, M. Technostress: The dark side of technologies. In *The impact of ICT on Quality of Working Life*; Korunka, C., Hoonakker, P., Eds.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2014; pp. 87-103.



## Module 3: Stress - how it works and how we cope with it

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 15-minute break

**Objective:** to understand how stress works and to explore one's own coping styles

**Format:** interactive lecture + practical exercises

### SLIDE 16 What is stress?

Stress is a natural reaction of the body - it can boost energy and motivation (*eustress*), but it can also become harmful when it lasts too long (*distress*).

The goal is not to eliminate stress entirely, but to understand it better and learn how to manage it effectively.

Stress can affect us in different ways:

- In the short term: increased energy and focus - helpful, for example, before a public performance
- In the long term: chronic fatigue, muscle tension, sleep disturbances, weakened immunity, and reduced concentration

#### Facilitator tip:

You may ask participants: “Can you think of a situation where stress helped you achieve a goal or motivated you to act? When does stress work in your favour, and when does it become harmful?”

### SLIDE 17 The bell curve of arousal

This model provides a great understanding of the relationship between arousal and performance. What might be helpful when it comes to the effects of stress is that short term, mild stress increases focus and improves performance while long-term and high level stress may have negative impact on the performance, especially when it comes to difficult tasks.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

Facilitator tip:

Let's imagine two examples:

"It's Monday morning, and [Employee A] is working on entering client data into a spreadsheet. The task is repetitive and doesn't require much cognitive effort. When a deadline approaches and they feel a slight pressure to finish faster, their focus improves, and they speed up - the adrenaline helps.

In this case, a **higher level of arousal** actually boosts performance. The task is simple, so stress works in their favor."

"Meanwhile, [Employee B] is preparing to mediate a conflict between two team members. The situation is emotionally charged and complex. As tension builds and stress rises, [Employee B] starts to feel overwhelmed - their ability to listen actively and think strategically declines.

For this **complex task**, too much arousal **impairs performance** - stress hijacks their executive functioning."

Key takeaway:

Performance improves with arousal **only to a point** - beyond that, especially in demanding tasks, it drops. Tailoring workload and support to the task's difficulty is essential for preventing burnout and maintaining productivity.

### SLIDE 18 To be stressed or not to be stressed? That is the question!

**Facilitator tip:** It is useful to ask participants: "Is a change of manager a stressful situation?"

Ask those who believe it is **stressful** to raise their left hand, and those who think it is **not stressful** to raise their right hand. There will likely be some people who say "**it depends**" - and that's exactly the point. This exercise effectively demonstrates that whether a situation is stressful or not depends on many individual factors, such as our experiences, mindset, coping style, and level of support.

This is a great starting point for a conversation about how different people perceive the same situations in different ways, and why there is no single "universal stressor" for everyone.

### SLIDE 19 Stress as a transaction between the individual and the environment

According to psychological theory, stress is understood in three distinct ways: as a **stimulus**, a **response**, and a **transaction**.



These perspectives show that stress is not only about what happens to us - it also depends on how we react to and interpret situations.

*(Heszen, 2013)*

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress arises when an individual perceives a situation as overwhelming, exceeding their ability to cope, and threatening their wellbeing. Their approach has helped us to better understand why the same issue can be stressful for one person but not for another - it all depends on the subjective interpretation of the situation.

The relationship between the individual and the environment is assessed by our mind in what is called **primary appraisal**. This is the first moment when we consider whether a given situation has any significance for us.

At this stage, we consider three possibilities:

- The situation has no significance - it is neutral to us, does not trigger any reaction.
- The situation is positive or beneficial - for example, it brings something good, provides joy or a sense of security.
- The situation is stressful - meaning it is difficult, demanding, or perceived as a threat.

It is this initial appraisal that determines whether a situation will cause us stress.

If we perceive a situation as stressful, we may view it in three ways:

- **Loss/harm** - when we feel that we have already lost something important, such as a job, a relationship, health, or reputation. Such a situation feels irreversible, and the person often feels helpless. Emotions such as **sadness, grief, and anger arise**.
- **Threat** - when we fear that something bad is about to happen. We recognise a potential danger that could harm us. Typical emotions include **anxiety and fear**.
- **Challenge** - when we see a difficult situation as an opportunity. We believe that we can handle it by using our skills and resources. This leads to emotions such as **motivation, mobilisation, and hope**.



**Facilitator tip:**

To help participants better understand the theory being presented, it is useful to use a simple, everyday example. This demonstrates that stress does not stem solely from the situation itself but from how it is subjectively appraised.

**Example:**

Kasia, a marketing specialist, has been given the task of preparing an advertising campaign in a very short time.

- If Kasia has experience with similar projects, access to resources (e.g. graphic design, budget, time), team support, and believes in her abilities, she does not feel strong stress. She perceives the demands as high but manageable - balance is maintained.
- However, if Kasia feels that she doesn't have enough time, lacks assistance, is overloaded with other responsibilities, and fears she won't manage - she perceives the situation as stressful. In her view, the demands exceed her available resources - disrupting the balance.

This example clearly illustrates that the occurrence of stress is primarily determined by the subjective appraisal of the situation - stress arises when an individual believes that the demands outweigh their ability to cope.

## SLIDE 20 Stress as a response - The "fight or flight" response

When we find ourselves in a threatening situation - whether real or imagined - our body reacts immediately. The **fight or flight** response was first described over a hundred years ago by American physiologist **Walter Cannon**.

W. Cannon (1915) observed that in response to stress, the body automatically triggers a biological survival mechanism that prepares it for quick action - either to confront the threat or to escape from it. This response is unconscious and immediate - and it was extremely useful for our ancestors when the threats were, for example, wild animals or the struggle for food.

Evolution favoured those who could react quickly - they were agile enough to escape or strong enough to overcome the threat.

Today, when something stressful happens - when we feel threatened, anxious, or extremely concerned - our body still reacts in the same way as it did thousands of years ago. This happens due to stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, produced by the adrenal glands.

These substances trigger a series of physiological changes that help us "survive" a challenging situation:

- We breathe faster to deliver more oxygen to our muscles and brain.
- Our heart rate increases, and blood pressure rises, allowing us to respond more quickly.
- Muscle tension increases - the body prepares for action.
- Digestive processes and other "less urgent" functions slow down to conserve energy.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- We become more **alert and focused** as the brain processes information more quickly and makes decisions faster.

This is a natural, instantaneous response - it occurs in a fraction of a second. While it evolved at a time when humans had to fight or flee from physical threats, today the same mechanism is activated in everyday situations, including work-related stress.

For example:

- Before giving a public presentation at a meeting
- During a difficult conversation with a supervisor or client
- When a tight deadline looms and pressure builds
- During a team conflict or stressful competition for a promotion
- When a sudden crisis arises at work, requiring quick action

## SLIDE 21 Types of stress

### Facilitator tip:

Before discussing the different types of stress, it's important to highlight that not all stress is the same - it varies in cause, duration, and intensity. You can start with a brief introduction to help participants identify their own experiences with various forms of stress.

A good opening question might be: **"Have you ever experienced stress that passed quickly, and at other times, stress that lasted a long time? How did these situations differ?"**

This can help participants better understand the next part of the material and prepare them for reflecting on their own functioning.

- **Acute stress**  
This is stress that appears suddenly and lasts for a short time but is very intense. It might be caused by, for example, a sudden argument or a difficult conversation with a supervisor. The body reacts quickly and strongly, but this state usually does not last long.
- **Chronic stress**  
This is stress that persists over a longer period of time - days, weeks, or even months. It is often not very intense, but it is constant and exhausting, such as prolonged conflict at work, job insecurity, or overload of responsibilities.
- **Traumatic stress**  
This stress occurs as a result of a very serious threat, such as an accident, violence, disaster, or other situation that endangers health or life. It can leave strong and long-lasting psychological effects.

*(Jarczak et al., 2018)*



## SLIDE 22 Physiological symptoms of stress

### Facilitator tip:

Before discussing the physiological symptoms, it is important to highlight that our body naturally reacts to stress, and many of these reactions - such as rapid breathing, muscle tension, or dry mouth - are completely normal and short-lived, occurring in response to difficult situations.

If these symptoms subside once the stress is over, there is no need for concern - it is a natural way the body prepares for action. However, it is important to draw participants' attention to the fact that prolonged, long-term stress can lead to more serious health consequences. Chronic tension affects not only our mental wellbeing but also our nervous, cardiovascular, digestive, and hormonal systems.

It's a good idea to clearly distinguish between these two levels of symptoms - short-term (acute) and long-term (chronic) - and emphasise that the sooner we respond, the easier it is to prevent more serious consequences.

### Physiological symptoms of stress - short-term (immediate) (*Merecz et al., 2011*)

- These symptoms appear quickly, are typically reversible, and are related to the body's mobilisation state:
- Muscle tension: stiff posture, clenched jaws, tight neck and back muscles, furrowed brow, and facial muscle tension
- Respiratory symptoms: shallow, rapid breathing, sometimes "gasping for air" (hyperventilation)
- Pain: headaches, back pain, neck pain, stomach aches, chest pain
- Digestive disorders: diarrhea, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite or overeating
- Other reactions: accelerated heart rate, trembling hands, sweating, dry mouth, teeth grinding, reddening of the skin, muscle tension, excessive salivation

### Physiological symptoms of stress - long-term (chronic) (*Merecz et al., 2011*)

These symptoms appear with prolonged exposure to stress and can lead to more serious disorders:

- Somatic diseases (body-related): obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, arteriosclerosis, heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders (e.g. irritable bowel syndrome), dermatological problems
- Hormonal and reproductive disorders: menstrual irregularities, infertility, reduced sperm quality, impotence

## SLIDE 23 Psychological consequences of stress



## BURNOUT PREVENT

### Facilitator tip:

When discussing the psychological symptoms of stress, it is important to emphasise that stress affects not only our body but also our emotions and thinking. The symptoms can be diverse - from emotional tension and anxiety to difficulties with concentration, memory, or decision-making. It is crucial to highlight that each person reacts differently - there is no single "right" way of experiencing stress. Some individuals may experience symptoms that sound severe, such as feelings of unreality (derealisation) or detachment from their own body (depersonalisation). Although these are very intense experiences, they can be a natural response of the body in extremely difficult situations and fall within the range of normal - as long as they do not persist for too long and do not cause distress.

Encourage participants not to judge themselves or others based on how they experience stress - what is more important is whether these reactions begin to interfere with daily functioning. If so, it is time to seek support.

### Symptoms at the emotional level

- fear, anxiety
- irritability, impulsiveness
- anger, outbursts of rage
- loss of control over emotions
- feeling overwhelmed, confused
- emotional tension, feeling depressed
- difficulty in relaxing, feeling constantly tense
- lowered mood, feelings of isolation
- loss of motivation, resignation
- depression, feelings of hopelessness

### Symptoms at the cognitive level

- memory problems, difficulty concentrating
- difficulty in processing and remembering information
- disorientation, difficulty in organising thoughts
- difficulty predicting consequences and planning actions
- difficulty in making decisions
- limited creativity
- a flurry of thoughts, difficulty in stopping the 'thought race'

## Slide 24 How do we cope with stress?

Each of us may react differently to stress. The way we try to cope with a difficult situation is called a coping style. It is our individual approach to difficulties - often learned, sometimes automatic.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

There are most commonly three main styles:

- **Task-focused style** - the person tries to solve the problem, identify the cause of the stress, and take action. This style works best when the situation is within our control (e.g. a delayed task - planning how to catch up).
- **Emotion-focused style** - the person focuses on regulating their emotions rather than the problem itself. This might include talking to a close friend, practising breathing exercises, or relaxing - this style can be helpful when the situation is beyond our control.
- **Avoidance-focused style** - the person distances themselves from the problem, avoids thinking about it, occupies themselves with something else, or postpones action. While this may provide temporary relief, if the problem persists, it can worsen stress and tension (Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński, 2010).

There is no "one correct" style - effectiveness depends on the situation. Sometimes, it's helpful to change the environment, and other times it's better to take care of yourself, seek support, and allow time to recover. It is important to be aware of which style we tend to use most often and whether it actually helps us.

### Facilitator tip:

At this point, it's a good idea to invite participants to engage in a brief individual reflection. You can ask each person to take a moment to think about which stress-coping style resonates most with them.

Encourage participants to reflect on the following questions:

- **How do I usually react in stressful situations?**
- **Does my coping style change depending on the situation?**
- **When does this style help me, and when might it cause more harm than good?**

This moment of reflection can serve as a good introduction to further discussion or a brief sharing of experiences in the group - of course, in a safe, non-judgemental atmosphere.

## SLIDE 25 Proactive stress management



## BURNOUT PREVENT

### Facilitator tip:

In this section, it's important to summarise the previously discussed ways of coping with work-related stress and highlight the increasingly emphasised proactive coping style in research. The focus here is on taking action before stress occurs, rather than only when it has already overwhelmed us.

Proactive coping involves, among other things, building psychological resources, developing resilience, enhancing skills, and maintaining work-life balance. It's important to note that this attitude not only reduces the risk of burnout in the future but also increases the sense of agency and control, which in itself is a key protective factor against stress.

You can encourage participants to reflect with the question: "What can I do today to better cope with the difficult situations that may arise tomorrow?"

In the process of proactive coping, five stages can be distinguished:

1. Accumulation of resources - gathering resources before a stressor occurs.
2. Recognition - the ability to identify the stressor, paying attention to potentially threatening factors in the environment.
3. Preliminary assessment of warning signals - evaluating what in a given situation is problematic for the individual and how it might develop.
4. Initial efforts to cope with the stressor - proactive actions taken by the individual to solve the problem, such as creating plans or seeking information.
5. Extraction and use of feedback - developing the ability to gather and utilise information about the situation for future plans and goals.
6. (*Aspinall, Taylor, 1997; Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński, 2010*)

## SLIDE 26 Stress management techniques

**Stress management techniques** are various methods that help reduce tension and enable us to cope better with challenging situations - both at work and outside of it. Sometimes, these can be simple actions, such as deep breathing or talking, and other times, they involve more conscious efforts, such as relaxation exercises or planning.

### Relaxation techniques - examples and brief descriptions

1. Progressive muscle relaxation (Jacobson's method)

This method involves tensing and then relaxing individual muscle groups in the body, step by step. It teaches us to consciously recognise muscle tension and release it. Exercise helps reduce physical symptoms of stress, such as muscle tension, headaches, or insomnia.

2. Autogenic training (Schultz's method)

This technique is based on autosuggestion and focuses attention on bodily sensations. The person practising these repeats short phrases to themselves, such as "my hand is heavy" or "I am breathing calmly", which leads to deep relaxation and a sense of peace.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

It is a form of psychophysical relaxation that helps reduce emotional tension and improves concentration.

### **Breathing techniques - how do they work?**

Breathing techniques involve consciously controlling the rhythm and depth of breathing, which influences the nervous system and the level of tension in the body. These techniques help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing stress.

### **Examples of breathing techniques:**

- **Diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing:** Slow, deep breaths using the diaphragm, which help calm the body and support relaxation.
- **4-7-8 breathing:** Inhale for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds. This technique helps slow the heart rate and promote relaxation.
- **Box breathing:** Equal phases of inhalation, holding the breath, exhalation, and holding again - each lasting 4 seconds. This technique is used by athletes and military personnel to maintain focus and calm under pressure.

### **Mindfulness (awareness)**

Mindfulness is a technique based on being consciously present in the here and now, without judgment. It involves focusing on the present moment - on the breath, bodily sensations, sounds, emotions - and observing them without trying to change or judge them.

### **[OPTIONAL EXERCISE]**

Give each participant 3-4 little colorful cards. Ask them to note down their own stress management techniques which are cheaper than a coffee. They can include any kind of stress release.

Draw a tree on the flipchart/whiteboard and stick these cards as leaves. You can group them: eg. sport, relaxation, outdoor activities, handwork, reading...

## **SLIDE 27** Why are stress management techniques beneficial?

### **1. They help reduce physical tension**

Relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing or Jacobson's progressive muscle relaxation help relax the muscles, slow down the breath and heart rate.

This allows the body to move out of "fight or flight" mode and return to a state of balance.

### **2. They calm the mind and emotions**

Exercises such as mindfulness or autogenic training help quiet excess thoughts and reduce emotional tension.

They facilitate regaining calm and distancing oneself from a difficult situation.



### 3. They improve concentration and decision-making

When stress decreases, it becomes easier to focus on tasks, plan the next steps, and act calmly, without rushing or panicking.

### 4. They increase mental resilience

Regular use of these techniques strengthens our resilience to stress in the future - we learn to recognise our own reactions and better control them.

### 5. They support physical health

By reducing stress, we decrease the risk of health problems such as headaches, digestive issues, high blood pressure, and insomnia.

### 6. They improve relationships with others

When we are calmer, it's easier to listen, communicate, and respond without tension - this fosters a better atmosphere at work and at home.

### 7. They help restore a sense of control

Even using simple techniques gives the feeling that we can do something about the situation, which in itself is calming and reinforces our sense of influence over the situation.

## SLIDE 28 Task management - Eisenhower Matrix

*Good planning and work organisation help restore a sense of control, which leads to a reduction in stress levels.* The prioritisation technique using the Eisenhower Matrix is a simple but very effective tool that helps decide which tasks to tackle first and which can be postponed or delegated to others.

The matrix divides all tasks into four categories (also known as quadrants), depending on whether they are important and urgent:

Eisenhower Matrix - Four Quadrants:

#### 1. Important and Urgent

→ Tasks to be done immediately (e.g., crises, last-minute deadlines)

*Act immediately.*

#### 2. Important but Not Urgent

→ Planning, development, problem prevention (e.g., learning, relationship-building, project preparation)

*Plan and act regularly - these are the most important tasks.*

#### 3. Urgent but Not Important



## BURNOUT PREVENT

→ Interruptions, unnecessary meetings, others' affairs (e.g., urgent emails, calls that can wait)  
*Delegate if possible.*

#### 4. Not Urgent and Not Important

→ Distractions and timewasters (e.g., aimlessly scrolling the internet, unnecessary tasks)  
*Limit or eliminate.*

This technique helps focus on what truly matters. It is highly effective in work planning and reducing stress related to chaos and task overload.

### Sources:

1. Heszen, I. (2013). *Psychologia Stresu*. PWN SA.
2. Jarczak, J., Noga, H., Małodobry, Z. (2018). Stres jako zagrożenie psychospołeczne w pracy policjanta. *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Technika, Informatyka, Inżynieria Bezpieczeństwa*, 6.
3. Lazarus, R., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. New York: Springer.
4. Merez, D., Waszkowska, M., Potocka, A., Mościcka, A., Drabek, M., Andysz, A., & Wężyk, A. (2011). *Profilaktyka psychospołecznych zagrożeń w miejscu pracy - od teorii do praktyki*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Instytutu Medycyny Pracy im. prof. J. Nofera.
5. Ogińska-Bulik, N., Juczyński, Z. (2010). *Osobowość, stres a zdrowie*. Difin.
6. Walter Bradford Cannon (1915). *Bodily changes in pain, hunger, fear, and rage*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. p. 211.



## Module 4 - Communication and relationships, daily practices

**Duration:** approximately 60 minutes + 10-minute break

**Objective:** Understanding the role of effective internal communication within the organisation.

**Format:** Interactive lecture

### SLIDE 29 How does communication impact the psychological wellbeing of a team?

Communication skills not only affect the quality of collaboration but also the team's psychological resilience. In an environment based on trust, openness, and mutual respect, it is easier to prevent burnout and a decline in motivation. (Wang, 2024)

**Why is communication in an organisation so important?**

- **Improves teamwork quality**
- Employees who can communicate effectively:
  - Quickly identify needs and problems,
  - Exchange knowledge more efficiently,
  - More easily reach agreement and consensus.
- **Supports innovation and creative thinking** - cooperative communication promotes the exchange of ideas, feedback, and collective learning - leading to the generation of new solutions and ideas.
- **Builds team cohesion and a sense of belonging** - regular, clear information flow strengthens team bonds, reduces misunderstandings, and improves employee morale.
- **Increases job satisfaction and engagement** - good communication not only supports efficiency but also leads to job satisfaction - which in turn results in better performance and lower employee turnover. (Wang, 2024)

### SLIDE 30 Building a culture of openness and trust

1. Psychological safety is the climate within a team where every member feels comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and taking risks - without fear of criticism or rejection.
1. People are not afraid to admit mistakes.
2. They can openly express opinions, including critical ones.
3. They have a sense of belonging and influence.

**Benefits:** Teams with a high level of psychological safety are more likely to implement innovations and adapt more quickly to changes.

- The greater the sense of safety → the better the quality of communication.
- The better the communication → the greater the chances for creative ideas, knowledge sharing, and successful implementation.



## SLIDE 31 Three pillars of psychological safety supporting communication

- 1. Collaboration and understanding**
  - Building a common language and intentions.
  - Accepting even "immature" ideas.
  - Openness to diverse thinking styles.
- 2. Sharing information**
  - Absence of knowledge silos.
  - Free exchange of information between departments and individuals.
  - Transparency in actions.
- 3. Balance of giving and taking**
  - Reciprocity: everyone has the right and responsibility to speak up.
  - Fair recognition of contributions.
  - Job satisfaction and satisfaction in relationships. (Jin et. Al 2024)

**Exercise (10 minutes): Pair work** - "How does communication support me in my daily work? What hinders sharing difficulties?"

## SLIDE 32 Supportive vs. stress-inducing communication - how do we communicate in the team?

### Supportive communication:

- Clarity of message, active listening, empathy, openness to differences.
- Examples of messages: "I care about your opinion", "How can we solve this together?"

**Effects:** Better coordination, increased engagement, team cohesion (Own elaboration based on Wang, 2024).

### Stress-inducing communication:

- Judgmental tone, one-sidedness, lack of recognition for differences, avoiding difficult conversations.

**Effects:** Weakened bonds, burnout, employee turnover (Own elaboration based on Gordon, 2023)

**Exercise (10 minutes): Transformation** - convert a stress-inducing message into a supportive one in pairs.

### [OPTIONAL EXERCISE]

Make pairs: One partner will be the storyteller; one will be the listener.

The storyteller shares an interesting story about himself/herself, in **4 minutes**. The partner has to listen in total silence, no verbal feedback is possible in these 4 minutes. Only listening is possible.

After this part, the listener summarizes this story in **3 minutes**, the other one keeps listening, without verbal feedback.

After this: **2 minutes** pair-discussion about the story.

Then: change of the roles and repeating the exercise with new roles.

After the exercise the trainer ask each participant:



- How did you feel yourself? What was easier: To tell or to listen?
- In normal life, what "role" do you prefer?
- How does it feel to be listened for 4 minutes without interruption?

### SLIDE 33 Good practices in daily communication: recognition, active listening, feedback

#### What is effective feedback?

Feedback should not just be an evaluation of an employee's behaviour or a "quick praise or reprimand". Good feedback involves a precise reference to specific behaviour, its consequences, and developmental potential. It's not about praising or scolding someone - it's about helping them grow.

#### Three pillars of effective feedback

Specificity: Refer to facts, not interpretations.

Instead of: "You behaved unprofessionally", it's better to say: "During the meeting with the client, you looked at your phone for most of the time."

Impact: Show the effect of the action on the team, client, or work outcome. For example: "The client might have felt that you didn't take them seriously".

Alternatives/Development: Offer a direction for change, not as an order, but as a suggestion to consider. For example: "If you maintained eye contact and asked one more question, the conversation could have been more engaging".

#### Reinforcing vs. Corrective feedback

Reinforcing feedback - used to reinforce positive behaviour:

For example: "Your approach to the client was very professional - the way you paraphrased their needs showed engagement."

Corrective feedback - used when something needs to be changed:

For example: "At the last meeting, the team didn't receive clear information about the tasks - perhaps it would be worth considering ending the meeting with a brief summary?"

### SLIDE 34 How to give feedback without triggering resistance?

The most common mistake when giving feedback is a moralising tone, using phrases like "because you always..." or "because you never...". Instead:

- Speak from an equal position (Adult to Adult), not from a "Parent to Child" position.
- Use collaborative language, not authoritative language.
- Show a willingness to solve the issue together, not to judge.

**Example:** Instead of saying "You need to try harder," say: "I'm wondering what we can do together to make your ideas have a greater impact on the team's results".

#### When and how often should you give feedback?

- On an ongoing basis - don't wait until the "annual review."
- At a neutral time and place - not in a stressful situation or publicly (especially if it's corrective feedback).
- With empathy - adapt your communication style to the person: some prefer specifics, others need more emotional support. (Gordon 2023)



## SLIDE 35 How to talk about difficulties, emotions, and needs?

### Supervisor-Employee Relationship:

- Ask open-ended questions ("What has been the most overwhelming for you lately?").
- Avoid judging, and provide space for the person to speak.
- Offer specific support: "How can I help you?", "What can we change?"

### Employee-Employee Relationship:

- Foster a climate of support, not competition.
- Observe non-verbal cues and respond with empathy.
- Short, honest conversations can have a significant impact on the atmosphere. (Jin 2024)

### From research (Schweitzer et al., 2025):

Relational communication patterns - such as support, humour, understanding - promote team effectiveness and protect against burnout.

### Exercise (10 minutes): Mini role-play - participants practise conversations in pairs:

1. Supervisor - Employee
2. Employee - Employee in a tense situation

## SLIDE 36 Structure, autonomy, shared goals, and team rituals

A supportive environment is not only about relationships but also about the daily framework for action:

- **Structure:** Clear division of roles, expectations, and goals - reduces uncertainty and frustration.
- **Autonomy:** The ability to influence how tasks are carried out supports a sense of agency.
- **Shared goals:** Team goals should be clearly defined and linked to the organization's mission - this increases motivation and a sense of purpose.
- **Team rituals:** Regular elements of collective action - check-ins, summaries, 1:1 meetings - strengthen regular communication and create space to express needs. (Own elaboration based on Jin, 2024)

**Exercise (10 minutes):** Group discussion - "What rituals could we implement to support relationships and well-being?"

## SLIDE 37 Summary and personal reflection

**Final exercise (10 minutes):** Personal card - each participant writes down two actions they will implement over the course of the week.

**Group contract:** Participants share one idea for change in the team. The facilitator writes them down on the board or flipchart.

### Teaching materials:

- **Exercise worksheet** with supporting messages.
- **Trainer materials** with questions for moderation.
- **Sample role-play scenarios** for conversations.
- **Personal reflection card.**

### WORKSHEET: Exercises with Supportive Messages

**Objective:** Developing the skill of formulating supportive messages in daily work.

Task 1: Transforming messages



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

Transform the following stress-inducing messages into supportive ones:

Stress-Inducing Message	Supportive Message
"You're always late."	
"I don't care how you do it, it just needs to be ready."	
"It's your fault the project didn't succeed."	
"You need to try harder."	
"I'm not interested in how you feel."	

**Task 2: My own situation**

Recall a difficult communication situation at work. How could the conversation have been conducted in a more supportive way?

**Situation description:**

.....  
.....

**My original message:**

.....

**My message after transformation:**

.....

**TRAINER MATERIAL: Discussion moderation questions**

**Introduction to the Topic:**

- What do we understand by “supportive communication”?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where a conversation helped avoid burnout or tension?

**After the exercises with messages:**

- How did you feel when you changed your communication style?
- What was the most difficult part of transforming the message?
- What benefits could this style of communication bring to the team?

**After the role plays:**

- What emotions did you experience while role-playing?
- What would you change in the dialogue?
- Which elements of a good conversation did you manage to apply?

**At the end:**

- What was the most important takeaway from today’s session?
- What actions can you implement immediately when you return to work?

**EXAMPLE SCENARIOS FOR ROLE-PLAY (for pair work)**

**Scenario 1: Supervisor - Employee**

**Situation:** The employee is not meeting deadlines and has stopped responding to emails. The supervisor wants to understand what’s going on.

**Goal:** Use open-ended questions, active listening, and offer support.

**Scenario 2: Employee - Employee**

**Situation:** One team member is constantly staying after hours. The other is unsure if they should react and how to offer help.



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

**Goal:** Use supportive communication, empathy, and a non-judgemental tone.

**Scenario 3: Difficult Feedback**

**Situation:** A colleague at a meeting with a client was distracted and ignored the client's questions. You need to give them feedback.

**Goal:** Practice feedback based on facts, consequences, and suggestions for change.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION CARD**

**Objective:** Individual summary and turning knowledge into action

**Think about and write down:**

1. What was the most valuable takeaway from today's training?  
.....
2. Which communication practices discussed today do I want to implement in my work?  
.....
3. What two specific things will I do in the next week to improve communication and relationships in my team?  
.....
4. ....
5. What support can I give others in the team to prevent burnout?  
.....

**Sources:**

1. Gordon T. *Nowa psychologia zarządzania: jak błyskawicznie zmotywować tych, którym chce się najmniej*. Gliwice: Onepress; 2023
2. Jin, Hao, Peng, Yan. (2024). The impact of team psychological safety on employee innovative performance a study with communication behavior as a mediator variable. *PLOS ONE*. 19. 10.1371/journal.pone.0306629.
3. Schweitzer, Vera, Gerpott, Fabiola & Lehmann-Willenbrock, Nale & De Leeuw, Sander, Schippers, Michaéla & Lu, Jiachun. (2025). Cracks in the Foundation: How Relational Communication Dynamics Predict Performance Improvement in Cross-Functional Teams. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*. 10.1111/jscm.12341.
4. Wang, He. (2024). The Impact of Communication Skills on Work Performance in Team Collaboration. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*. 121. 99-106. 10.54254/2754-1169/121/20242359.



## MODULE 5 - COR-SA (E) and (M) - From problem recognition to joint action

**Duration:** For all of the participants - around 15 minutes, then extra 20-30 minutes for the managers to explain the use of the tools in their organisation

**Objective:** Introduction to the COR-SA (E) and (M) tools

**Format:** Lecture

### SLIDE 39 Burnout assesment tools

In Burnout Prevent Project we aim to address burnout risk levels in SME's from the Smart Specialisation Sector.

Within this Interreg Central Europe Project we developed the tools helpful in identification of factors associated with burnout from both, an individual and organisational perspective.

#### **B-SA tool:**

The tool helps to assess the individual risk of burnout and contains practical recommendations and tips for individual results.

#### **COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M):**

Those are two complementary tools, designed for corporate use, that allow the identification of organisational burnout risk factors from the perspective of managers and employees. It comes with a manual with detailed instructions for use and practical recommendations for organisational actions and supporting the employees.

### SLIDE 40 B-SA tool - online version

B-SA tool is a quick, easy and effective self-assessment method that takes only a few minutes to fill out. It consists of 18 questions, allowing the assessment of the risk of burnout. After filling out the questionnaire, the participant receives a score and a set of recommendations corresponding to their individual needs. The addition to BSA-Tool is a „Guide for people facing a challenge of burnout - useful knowledge capsules”. It is a short handbook, containing the most important and helpful methods to minimize the risk of burnout among employees.

### SLIDE 41 Satisfactory form

This is the last slide of the presentation for the employees and managers. Kindly ask the participants to complete provided satisfactory forms.



\*This section is intended for those who are interested. The tools are particularly important for managers, and it is essential that all of them familiarise themselves with them.

## SLIDE 42 What are COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M)?

COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) are tools developed within the framework of the Interreg Central Europe - Burnout Prevent project. They are used to identify psychosocial risk factors for burnout and assess their frequency of occurrence - from the perspective of employees (E) and management (M).

COR-SA (E) and (M) tools cover 9 key areas related to the risk of occupational burnout:

- **Unfair Treatment and Compensation** - the subjective feeling of being treated unequally at work, such as insufficient recognition or unfair compensation.
- **Role Ambiguity** - the subjective feeling of a lack of clarity regarding the scope of duties, responsibilities, and expectations associated with a given role.
- **Lack of Control Over Work** - the inability to make autonomous decisions concerning how work is organized and other operational aspects of the company.
- **Poor Communication and Lack of Support** - difficulties in communication between supervisors and colleagues, as well as a lack of willingness to help from management.
- **Unjustified Pressure** - experiencing high work pace and pressure to deliver results.
- **Value Inconsistency** - a mismatch between the values of the employee and the values of the organization they work for.
- **Discrimination** - unequal treatment of employees based on factors such as gender, age, disability, race, religion, nationality, beliefs, sexual orientation, union membership, or fixed vs. open-ended employment.
- **Work-Life Conflict** - situations where work obligations conflict with personal life, such as family time, rest, or personal interests.
- **Technological Stress** - information overload related to the use of technology.

## SLIDE 43-46 COR-SA (E)

	Symptoms/Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I receive the recognition I deserve for my work.					
2.	Considering all my efforts and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately.					



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

3.	Compared to my colleagues, I have inadequate amount of work responsibilities.					
4.	The expectations placed on me at work are not clear.					
5.	My workplace lacks clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					
6.	I'm unsure about how my role contributes to the overall goals of my company.					
7.	I perform my work tasks in my preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					
8.	My work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.					
9.	I can have influence on the decisions related to my work in the company					
10.	I receive support if I encounter difficulties with my tasks.					
11.	It is hard for me to communicate with my supervisors when it's needed.					
12.	Communication with my associates is insufficient.					
13.	Excessive duties force me to maintain a high working pace.					
14.	I'm unable to use all of my vacation days because of my work responsibilities.					
15.	I feel time and/or performance pressure.					
16.	I have to make decisions that do not align with my beliefs and values.					
17.	I do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18.	I think my work contributes to something meaningful.					
19.	My superiors and my colleagues communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					
20.	My clients/patients/customers communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

21.	I feel discriminated at work (because of my gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					
22.	My work negatively affects my private life.					
23.	It is expected to work overtime in my workplace.					
24.	I have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying to texts and phone calls) with my workplace even in my free time.					
25.	I feel the pressure not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes in my workplace.					
26.	In my workplace, there is a lack of training that would help me adapt to modern technologies.					
27.	I fear that modern technologies could easily replace me in my job.					

**SLIDE 47-50 COR-SA (M)**

Symptoms/Indicators		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	The employees receive the recognition they deserve for their work.					
2.	Considering all their efforts and achievements in their job, I feel that the employees get paid appropriately.					
3.	The responsibilities are fairly divided among the employees.					
4.	I make sure that my expectations are clear to the employees.					
5.	In our company we follow clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					
6.	I make sure that the employees are aware of how their role contributes to the overall goals of the company.					
7.	The employees perform their work tasks in their own preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					
8.	The employees' work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.					



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

9.	The employees can have influence on the decisions associated with their work.					
10.	The employees receive support if they encounter difficulties with their tasks.					
11.	I try to make it easy for the employees to reach to me when they need it.					
12.	Communication between the employees is insufficient.					
13.	Excessive duties force the employees to maintain a high working pace.					
14.	The employees are unable to use all of their vacation days because of work responsibilities.					
15.	There is a culture of racing in my company.					
16.	The employees have to make decisions that do not align with their beliefs and values.					
17.	The employees do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18.	I try to emphasize how the employees' work contributes to something meaningful.					
19.	In my company people communicate with each other in an uncivilised manner.					
20.	Clients/patients/customers communicate with the employees in an uncivilised manner.					
21.	The employees experience discrimination at work (because of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					
22.	I observe that the employees' work negatively affects their personal lives.					
23.	The employees are expected to work overtime.					
24.	The employees have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying to texts and phone calls) with their workplace even in their free time.					



BURNOUT PREVENT

25.	There is a pressure among the employees not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes.					
26.	The employees complain about the lack of training that would help them adapt to modern technologies.					
27.	Modern technologies are seen by the employees as a threat to their job security.					

### SLIDE 51 How to Interpret the Results?

Responses to the questions are given on a five-point scale, including the answers: never, rarely, sometimes, often, always. Each response is assigned a specific number of points.

The points are then summed up to give an overall result, which should be compared to established intervals to provide appropriate recommendations.

In **COR-SA (E)** and **COR-SA (M)**, a rating scale from 0 to 4 points is used to assess the frequency of specific situations in the workplace as perceived by employees/managers. The questions address both potentially detrimental conditions (e.g., work overload, role ambiguity) and positive organizational aspects (e.g., recognition, engagement, and support).

Therefore, the items are scored in different ways. For some statements, a higher score indicates a greater intensity of difficulties, while for others, a higher score reflects a greater frequency of positive phenomena occurring in the workplace.

In the manuals, tables are provided with the points that should be assigned to each answer in the respective questions. After calculating the scores for each question (taking into account the reversed scale where applicable), the individual points should be summed up and compared with the intervals that indicate specific recommendations.

### SLIDE 52 COR-SA (E) Scoring

**COR-SA (E)** applies a 0-4-point scale that enables employees to assess how often specific situations occur in their workplace.

The items address both potentially harmful conditions (e.g. overload, unclear roles) and positive organisational aspects (e.g. recognition, engagement, support).

Therefore, **items are scored differently depending on their nature:**

- For negative statements, a **higher score indicates more frequent difficulties.**
- For positive statements, a **higher score reflects more frequent positive experiences.**



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

---

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	0 points
RARELY	1 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	3 points
ALWAYS	4 points

---

**This scale applies to the following questions:**

3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

In questions numbered 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, and 18, a reverse scoring scale is applied:

---

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	4 points
RARELY	3 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	1 points
ALWAYS	0 points

---

After calculating the score for each question, the individual points should be **summed up** and then compared against defined thresholds, which indicate specific recommendations.

### SLIDE 53 COR-SA (M) Scoring

In the COR-SA (M) tool, a 0 to 4-point scale is used to help managers assess how frequently specific situations occur within their teams. The questions address both potentially unfavourable conditions (e.g. unfair treatment, lack of role clarity) and positive organisational aspects (e.g. effective communication, support, alignment of values).

Because of this, the items are scored in two different ways:

- For some statements, a higher score indicates greater intensity of difficulty.
- For others, a higher score reflects the more frequent presence of positive factors in the team.

Below is a table showing the number of points assigned to each response, depending on the question.

---

RESPONSE	Score
----------	-------



## BURNOUT PREVENT

NEVER	0 points
RARELY	1 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	3 points
ALWAYS	4 points

This scoring scale applies to the following questions: **8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27.**

For questions **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 18**, reverse scoring is applied:

RESPONSE	Score
NEVER	4 points
RARELY	3 points
SOMETIMES	2 points
OFTEN	1 points
ALWAYS	0 points

After calculating the score for each question, the individual points should be summed up and compared with the ranges that indicate specific recommendations.

### SLIDE 54 SCORE CALCULATION FORM

To facilitate the score-calculation process we have created a dedicated form suited for both COR-SA tools.

### SLIDE 55 Recommendations

Both tools share one guide, containing practical recommendations for organisational action and ideas of directly supporting the employees.

#### Managing psychosocial risk - The key to preventing burnout

The first and most important step in preventing burnout is the effective management of **psychosocial risk**.



Psychosocial risk refers to the likelihood that unfavourable psychosocial working conditions will lead to negative outcomes—both in terms of mental and physical health, as well as professional functioning (Merecz et al., 2011, p. 14, after Cox, Griffiths & Rial-Gonzalez, 2006).

In practice, this means that factors such as excessive pressure, role ambiguity, or lack of social support—if they persist over time and exceed an employee’s capacity to manage them—can lead to serious health consequences, including burnout.

### How to manage psychosocial risk - 5 key stages with practical tips

Effective psychosocial risk management is a process that can be broken down into **five essential stages**.

Each of these can be successfully implemented by managers, team leaders, or HR professionals as part of everyday organisational management and a conscious effort to support employee well-being.

The following stages are based on the recommendations published by the **Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine**.

#### Stage 1: Risk Assessment

The first step is understanding which aspects of the work environment may be psychologically or organisationally burdensome for employees. It’s important to identify both what is perceived as **stressful** or **frustrating** and what **motivates and supports** employees in their day-to-day work. Identifying these resources allows you to consciously protect and strengthen them.

Every team is unique, so it’s best to gather insights directly from its members. Avoid assumptions—ask open and curious questions like:

- What works well?
- What gets in the way?
- What needs to change?

#### How to gather information:

- **Anonymous surveys** (e.g. online) or open-ended questionnaires (e.g. “Which elements of your daily work feel most burdensome?”).
- **One-on-one or team discussions** in a friendly and safe atmosphere.
- **Observation of indicators** like frequent absences, reduced engagement, or rising conflicts.
- **Review of task allocation** - Is the workload evenly distributed? Are roles clearly defined?

You can also use established tools like **CORSA (E)** (for employees) and **CORSA (M)** (for managers), or develop your own list of psychosocial stressors tailored to your sector or team.

#### Tip for Managers:

Before jumping into solutions, observe your team’s day-to-day functioning. Often, actions speak louder than data. Consider what questions you truly need answered and choose the right tools accordingly. This ensures you collect reliable insights that help you understand what really affects employee well-being.

#### Stage 2: Action planning

Once you understand the key stressors, the next step is to plan appropriate actions—ones that are feasible and tailored to the specific needs of your team. Avoid vague intentions or long-term postponements. Instead, break the plan down into **concrete steps** aligned with organisational capabilities.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

This is a time for **strategic thinking**:

- What can be improved?
  - Who should be involved?
  - What resources are available?
- Consider:
- Which areas need urgent action, and which can change gradually?
  - Are actions aligned with what employees have raised?
  - Do you need external support (e.g. trainer, psychologist, HR)?
  - How will you know if the action worked?

### Tip for Managers:

Plans can be made independently or with the team, other managers, or mental health specialists. Prioritise the most urgent issues, identify specific solutions, assign responsibility, and set deadlines. Focus on **realistic goals**—small steps in the right direction are better than ambitious plans that never materialise. Realism builds trust and engagement.

### Stage 3: Implementation

Change doesn't require a revolution. Small, consistent improvements often yield the best results. What matters most is that the actions match your plan and genuinely address team needs—not just surface-level fixes.

This stage is about **turning intentions into action**—reducing stressors, enhancing resources, and improving psychosocial working conditions.

### Potential actions:

- **Organisational changes:** clearer division of roles, realistic timelines, transparent procedures.
- **Work environment adjustments:** reduce noise, overload, or constant interruptions.
- **Soft skills training:** communication, assertiveness, stress management—keep them short, practical, and open.
- **Supporting psychological resources:** screen breaks, quiet zones, flexible hours, “focus time” with no meetings.
- **Psychological support:** offering access to a psychologist or mental health advisor (e.g. consultations, counselling).
- **Off-site activities:** stress management workshops or relaxation training outside the office may be more effective and reduce perceived pressure.

### Practical example:

If employees report communication chaos, work together to define clear rules—e.g. no messages after work hours, one task platform (e.g. email or Teams only), or which updates should go to everyone. If feedback is lacking, introduce short regular 1:1 meetings or a feedback checkpoint after each project. These low-cost actions can significantly improve collaboration and support.

### Stage 4: Evaluation

After some time, review whether the changes are having the desired impact. This crucial step highlights successes and identifies areas that need tweaking. A well-conducted evaluation not only shows what works—it also builds trust and reinforces that the changes were worthwhile.

Evaluation should cover both the **implementation process** and **results**—did actions go as planned, and did they truly improve conditions and well-being?

### Ways to evaluate:



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- **Re-collect employee feedback** (surveys, interviews) to compare with the baseline.
- **Assess work perception** - do employees feel less stressed, more engaged, and supported?
- **Review organisational indicators** - e.g. fewer absences, better team climate, reduced turnover.
- **Health and wellbeing assessment** - fewer stress symptoms, better sleep, improved mood?
- **Internal summary** - team meetings or reports: what worked, what didn't, and what to continue or change?

### Timing matters:

Some effects (e.g. clearer communication) appear quickly. Others (e.g. improved mental health) take time. Don't evaluate too early—or too late. Plan this stage thoughtfully.

### Tip for Managers:

Make evaluation a **regular part of the process**, not a one-off check. Truly effective actions are those that sustain their benefits. If improvements fade, use the moment to refresh or adapt your approach.

### Stage 5: Organisational learning

Don't just fix what's broken—nurture what works. Embedding good practices makes psychosocial risk management part of organisational culture, not a crisis response. It's also a chance for teams to learn from experience and strengthen positive behaviour patterns.

This stage is about **continuous learning and development**. Evaluation becomes a **starting point**, not an endpoint, for further improvement.

### Consider:

- **Sharing success stories** - in team meetings, onboarding materials, or internal training.
- **Regular workplace reviews** - even short quarterly check-ins can catch early warning signs.
- **Creating space for conversations** - e.g. opening meetings with "What's helping you today?"
- **Encouraging reflection and shared learning** - quick project summaries or lessons learned each quarter.
- **Sustaining effective activities** - e.g. repeating workshops, running refresher sessions, or reminding staff of support resources.

### Example:

If stress management workshops proved effective, consider repeating them regularly—as refreshers, knowledge boosters, or team-building activities.

### Tip for Managers:

Not everything has to work perfectly from day one. What matters most is that solutions are observed, adjusted, and strengthened based on team experience. Remember—**psychosocial risk management is a process**. Each assessment is an opportunity to grow, not a test to pass.

You can start managing psychosocial risks with **simple steps**. It doesn't require massive resources or structural changes. The essentials are **awareness, consistency, and open dialogue**. With a mindful approach, you can not only prevent burnout but build a healthier, more supportive work environment based on **trust, openness, and mutual respect**.



**Facilitator tip:**

At this point, it's important to emphasize that risk management is a crucial element in preventing the negative consequences of workplace stress. It's beneficial for the trainer to explain that this isn't a one-time action but rather a multi-step process that includes identifying risks, assessing their impact, planning preventive actions, and monitoring them over time.

**Explanation of psychosocial risk:**

Psychosocial risk refers to the likelihood that stressful working conditions—such as excessive workload, unclear expectations, poor relationships, or lack of support—will persist for too long and eventually negatively affect the employee's health and performance.

In practice, this means that if someone feels overwhelmed, lost, or unappreciated for an extended period, and the company does nothing about it, the risk of burnout, sick leave, deteriorating team atmosphere, and decreased effectiveness increases. Managing this risk is essentially about taking care of people and the quality of the work environment—before problems grow into crises.

**What is *psychosocial risk*?**

Psychosocial risk refers to the likelihood that adverse psychosocial conditions in the work environment will lead to negative consequences - for the employee's mental and physical health as well as their professional functioning (Merecz et al., 2011, cited in: Cox, Griffiths & Rial-Gonzalez, 2006).

In practice, this means that factors **such as:**

- excessive pressure and work pace,
- ambiguity of expectations or roles,
- interpersonal conflicts,
- lack of support from supervisors,
- limited opportunities for professional development,
- job insecurity

– if they **persist** and exceed the employee's ability to cope with them, can lead to serious consequences.

**SLIDE 56** How to Effectively Manage Psychosocial Risks?

The process of managing this risk can be divided into **5 practical stages:**

**Stage 1: Risk Assessment**

The first step is to identify the sources of stress in the workplace. It's important to gather information from employees—what burdens them, what works well, and what needs improvement.

**Methods:**

- Tools for assessing burnout risk (e.g., COR-SA E/M tools),
- Anonymous forms, questionnaires, surveys,
- One-on-one conversations and team meetings,
- Observation (e.g., increased absenteeism, decreased engagement, conflicts).

It is crucial not to rely on assumptions but actively listen to employees' voices.



### ***Stage 2: Action Planning***

After identifying the problems, it is important to create a realistic action plan. It should address the specific needs of the team and consider available resources—time, budget, support from other people or departments.

Consider the following:

- What can be improved in the short term, and what needs a long-term approach?
- Who will be responsible for the actions?
- What changes will provide real support to the team?

### ***Stage 3: Implementing Actions***

Time for concrete steps to improve working conditions. They don't have to be major reforms—effectiveness and suitability to the needs are key.

#### **Examples of actions:**

- Streamlining task division,
- Improving communication within the team,
- Introducing flexible working hours,
- Organizing training (e.g., communication, stress management, assertiveness),
- Providing employees with access to psychological support,
- Creating a quiet space or time for regeneration.

### ***Stage 4: Evaluating Results***

After implementing the changes, it's important to check whether they bring real benefits. This can be done through surveys, questionnaires, conversations, or observing the changes within the team.

Key questions to ask:

- Do employees feel better?
- Has stress at work decreased?
- Has the atmosphere, engagement, and communication improved?

### ***Stage 5: Organizational Learning***

The final stage is to solidify what works. It's important to share good practices, conduct regular reviews of working conditions, and collectively seek solutions.

An organization that learns from its experiences is more resilient to crises and more supportive of its employees.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

### Trainer's Note:

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that any actions aimed at improving working conditions and reducing stress should be preceded by gathering reliable information. The best approach is to use anonymous surveys, one-on-one conversations, team meetings, or observing the day-to-day functioning of the team.

Only in this way can we ensure that the proposed changes truly address the real needs of employees, rather than being random, superficial, or solely based on assumptions from the top down. A thorough identification of psychosocial risks is the first and most important step towards effective prevention.

### Sources:

1. Merecz, D., Waszkowska, M., Potocka, A., Mościcka, A., Drabek, M., Andysz, A., & Wężyk, A. (2011). *Psychospołeczne zagrożenia zawodowe*. Łódź: Oficyna Wydawnicza Instytutu Medycyny Pracy im. prof. J. Nofera.
2. CORSA (M) - Narzędzie do oceny psychospołecznych aspektów środowiska pracy. Wersja dla kadry zarządzającej.
3. CORSA (E) - Narzędzie do oceny psychospołecznych aspektów środowiska pracy. Wersja dla pracowników.



## Module 6: Reflection and Closing - "What am I taking with me?"

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Objective:** Collective summarisation. What can everyone implement "from tomorrow"?

**Format:** Discussion

### SLIDE 38 Reflection - "What am I taking with me?"

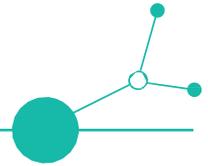
At the end of the training, it is important for each participant to have the opportunity to pause for a moment and share their reflections - not only to close the session but also to reinforce the key takeaways and ideas that they can apply in their daily life or work.

#### Example questions for participants:

- What particularly stood out to you?
- What did you find most useful?
- What new things have you learned today?
- What would you like to start doing differently after this training?
- What one thing from today's session can help you manage stress?
- What are you taking with you for the future?

# Instructions for Implementing Partners

Training Implementation in Test Countries





## 1. Purpose and Score

This document provides detailed instructions for implementing the training programme in the designated test countries. It outlines the overall timeframe, session formats, participant guidelines, content requirements, and reporting obligations.

## 2. Training Timeline

**Implementation Window:** Mid-September to Mid-November 2025

**Start Date:** Monday, 15th September 2025

**End Date:** Friday, 14th November 2025

Partners should schedule and complete all training sessions within this period.

## 3. Training Structure and Formats

**Total Trainings per Country:** 3 sessions

**SME Training 1:** Offline (20 participants)

**SME Training 2:** Offline (20 participants)

**SME Training 3:** Online (20 participants)

**Participant Count:** 60 participants per country, comprising both managers and employees.

**Session Duration:** 6 hours each (including breaks).

**Module Coverage:** Each session must cover all 6 modules outlined in the scenario framework.



## 4. Content and Scenario Framework

The provided scenario is a **guideline** that suggests topics, activities, and exercises for each of the six modules:

*Module 1: Occupational burnout*

*Module 2: Psychosocial risks in the workplace*

*Module 3: Stress - how it works and how we cope with it*

*Module 4: Communication and relationships, daily practices*

*Module 5: COR-SA (E) and (M) - From problem recognition to joint action. \*This section is intended for those who are interested. The tools are particularly important for managers, and it is essential that all of them familiarise themselves with them.*

*Module 6: Reflection and Closing - "What am I taking with me?"*

**Mandatory Completion:** All modules must be addressed in every session. Partners may select or adapt specific elements and exercises according to local needs and participant pace.

**Flexibility:** Adjust examples, case studies, and activities. Partner discretion is encouraged to enhance relevance.

## 5. Language and Translation

- **Training presentation:** The presentation will be provided in English.

**Translation Requirement:** After downloading the file, translate slides into the local language.

**Customisation:** Partners may modify the introduction slides to reflect country-specific contexts.

Each of the partners is responsible for posting the relevant contact information and adding QR codes (if they choose to use them in training courses) to the presentation.

- **Training scenario:**

**Translation Requirement:** The scenario will be provided in English. After downloading the file, translate the scenario into the local language.



- COR-SA (M) & COR-SA (E)

**Translation Requirement:** The manual will be provided in English. After downloading the file, translate the manual into the local language.

- **Satisfaction survey** and **handouts package** files for translation will be provided by the end of June in Word format. After receiving it back, NIOM will implement it in the dedicated Canva's template and provide final version back to print before the trainings.

## 6. Rehearsal

**Optional:** Conducting a full rehearsal of the training session before the end of August is entirely voluntary.

**Purpose:** To help assess the appropriate pace and structure of the training by testing activities, timing, and delivery methods.

**Documentation:** No formal documentation is required. However, implementing partners can share informal conclusions or questions with the PP2 (NIOM) team before the end of August 2025.

**Contact person:** [aleksandra.marczak@imp.lodz.pl](mailto:aleksandra.marczak@imp.lodz.pl)

## 7. Materials and Surveys

Partners will receive files containing:

- COR-SA (M) & COR-SA (E) Manual for translation;
- Participant handouts (printed materials covering all module content) for translation;
- Participant satisfaction surveys for translation.

**Printing & Distribution:** Print translated handouts package, survey per participant and COR-SA (M) & COR-SA (E) Manuals (one for each participant).

**Survey Completion:** Collect completed surveys at the end of each session.



## 8. Reporting Requirements

**Training Report:** For each country, submit a consolidated report template.

**Submission Deadline:** Report must be submitted to PP2 (NIOM) by the end of November 2025.

## 9. Contact and Support

**PP2 (NIOM):**

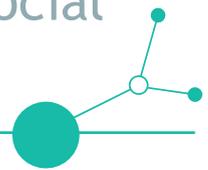
- Aleksandra Marczak (aleksandra.marczak@imp.lodz.pl)
- Paulina Kaczmarek (paulina.kaczmarek@imp.lodz.pl)
- Kaja Staszewska (kaja.staszewska@imp.lodz.pl)

For questions regarding content, logistics, or reporting, please reach out at least one week before the relevant deadline.

Thank you for your collaboration and commitment to high-quality training delivery.

# COR-SA (M) & COR-SA (E)

Complementary tools for assessing the psychosocial aspects of the work environment



Version 1  
06 2025





## MANUAL

### About the Project

The **Burnout Prevent Project**, funded by **Interreg Central Europe**, aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of both management and employees in recognising and preventing occupational burnout. The project will result in the development of an **organisational model** that incorporates **primary and secondary prevention strategies**, with the goal of reducing the risk of burnout among employees in **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** operating in three sectors: **Industry 4.0, Smart Health, and Sustainable Food**. This initiative is particularly important, as the symptoms of burnout can lead to a decline in mental health, including the development of **depression and anxiety disorders**.

### Description of the COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) Tools

#### What are the COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) tools and who are they for?

The Corporate Burnout Assessment Tools COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) were developed within the Interreg Central Europe - Burnout Prevent project to support early identification of psychosocial risk factors associated with occupational burnout. Together, they offer a comprehensive and balanced view of psychosocial working conditions, integrating insights from both employees and managers.

**COR-SA (E)** (Employees' perspective) is designed to assess how employees perceive psychosocial hazards in their daily work. It captures their experiences and the frequency of work-related stressors that may contribute to burnout. Importantly, this tool is intended for group-level analysis only and should not be used to evaluate individuals.

**COR-SA (M)** (Managers' perspective) allows organisations to explore the same risk factors from the management perspective, helping identify stressors that may exist within the structure, culture, or demands of the workplace.

When used together, COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) provide a holistic overview of the psychosocial work environment. This dual approach helps reduce individual bias, highlights differences or alignment in perception between staff and leadership and encourages constructive dialogue about areas that require attention. Managers and employees are encouraged to jointly review the results, fostering mutual understanding and supporting informed, collaborative improvements to workplace well-being.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

The tool enables the identification of **key psychosocial factors** that increase the risk of employee burnout, such as:

- Unfair treatment and remark
- Remuneration
- Role ambiguity
- Lack of control over work
- Poor communication and lack of support
- Unjustified pressure
- Misalignment of organisational values and goals
- Discrimination
- Work-life conflict
- Technostress

Aggregated data provides valuable insights into how workplace risks are collectively perceived, allowing organisations to identify systemic issues and areas that require attention. The results facilitate a deeper understanding of organisational challenges, support the design of preventive strategies, guide improvements in working conditions, and help align organisational policies with employees' actual needs.

The collected information shows how employees view psychosocial hazards in the workplace, helping managers notice patterns and respond before problems grow. These insights support better decisions, help prevent future issues and improve everyday working conditions. They also ensure that policies reflect what staff actually need. COR-SA tools help to identify sources of stress and provide structured feedback on the work environment. It enables both employees and managers to better understand what's affecting their well-being and to take steps toward creating a healthier, more supportive workplace.

### What are psychosocial factors, and when do they become a risk?

Psychosocial factors are **various elements of the work environment** that affect how employees feel at work. These may include aspects such as **the organisation of work, working relationships, level of responsibility, or the clarity of roles and tasks.**

Some of these factors are not inherently good or bad – it all depends on how they are **perceived by the employee.** A situation that feels neutral to one person might be a source of stress to another.

**Stress** plays a key intermediary role here – linking the factor to its potential outcomes. If stress persists and is not effectively managed, it can lead to **chronic fatigue, reduced motivation, diminished mental resilience, and eventually burnout.**

### What is occupational burnout?



**Occupational burnout** is a state of psychophysical exhaustion related to work. According to the definition by Schaufeli et al. (2020, cited in Basińska, Gruszczyńska & Schaufeli, 2021), it involves:

- Profound fatigue
- A sense of emotional detachment from one's duties
- Difficulty regulating emotions and cognitive processes

This state is often accompanied by low mood and non-specific stress symptoms – both psychological and psychosomatic.

Employee burnout adversely affects the entire organisation, potentially increasing **absenteeism**, **reducing productivity and engagement**, and leading to **higher staff turnover**. This creates further **costs linked to recruitment and onboarding** and may **negatively affect team atmosphere, work quality, and relations with clients**.

Proper management of psychosocial conditions by team leaders is crucial for preventing burnout before it escalates into health problems or long-term absence.

**Raising awareness** of psychosocial burdens and responding to warning signs fosters a culture based on **care, trust, and mutual respect**. A well-designed work environment that meets employees' real needs not only mitigates burnout risk but also **strengthens engagement and loyalty**.

Managing employee wellbeing should be treated as a **strategic priority** that supports sustainable and effective business development.

## Tools structure

Both the COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) tools assess key areas of potential psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

These areas include:

- **Unfair treatment and remuneration** - a subjective sense of unequal treatment at work, e.g. lack of recognition or unfair pay.
- **Role ambiguity** - unclear responsibilities, expectations, and scope of duties.
- **Lack of control over work** - limited autonomy in decision-making and work organisation.
- **Poor communication and lack of support** - difficulties in communication with managers and colleagues, and a lack of willingness to help from leadership.
- **Unjustified pressure** - experiencing intense work pace and performance pressure.



- **Value misalignment** - a mismatch between the employee's personal values and those of the organisation.
- **Discrimination** - unequal treatment based on gender, age, disability, race, religion, nationality, beliefs, sexual orientation, trade union membership, or contract type.
- **Work-life conflict** - job demands conflicting with personal life, such as family, rest, or hobbies.
- **Technostress** - information overload and strain caused by technology use.

## Response Scale

Both COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M) use a five-point response scale: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Always. Each option corresponds to a numerical value. The points assigned to individual responses are summed to produce a total score. This score is then compared with predefined threshold ranges, which serve as the basis for generating tailored recommendations aimed at improving psychosocial working conditions.

Scores can also be calculated within each indicator, allowing for more detailed analysis of specific psychosocial risk areas. A mean score above 2 points in any indicator should be considered a warning sign. The tool provides recommendations adjusted both to the overall result (sum of all responses) and to the individual indicator scores, supporting targeted and effective interventions.

Below is a list of indicators, each of which includes a dedicated set of statements used to assess that specific risk area:

Indicator	Statement n °
<i>Unfair treatment and remuneration</i>	1, 2, 3
<i>Role ambiguity</i>	4, 5, 6
<i>Lack of control over work</i>	7, 8, 9
<i>Poor communication and lack of support</i>	10, 11, 12
<i>Unjustified pressure</i>	13, 14, 15
<i>Value misalignment</i>	16, 17, 18
<i>Discrimination</i>	19, 20, 21
<i>Work-life conflict</i>	22, 23, 24
<i>Technostress</i>	25, 26, 27

Table 1. Key Indicators and Corresponding Item Numbers.

## Scoring Method



## BURNOUT PREVENT

In both COR-SA (E) and COR-SA (M), a 0 to 4-point scale is used to assess how frequently specific situations occur in the work environment—from the perspective of either employees or managers. The statements cover both potentially unfavourable conditions (e.g. unfair treatment, role ambiguity) and positive organisational aspects (e.g. effective communication, support, alignment of values).

Because of this, two different scoring approaches are applied:

- For some items, a higher score indicates a greater presence of risk or difficulty.
- For others, a higher score reflects more frequent experience of favourable conditions.

This structure allows the tools to capture both the challenges and strengths of the psychosocial work environment.

Below there are tables showing how many points are assigned to each response, depending on the statement type.

Response	Score (standard items)	Score (reversed items)
Never	0	4
Rarely	1	3
Sometimes	2	2
Often	3	1
Always	4	0

**Reverse scoring applies to statements: 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 18.**

Table 2. COR-SA (E) - Response Table with Assigned Points for Each Statement

Response	Score (standard items)	Score (reversed items)
Never	0	4
Rarely	1	3
Sometimes	2	2
Often	3	1
Always	4	0

**Reverse scoring applies to statements: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 18.**

Table 3. COR-SA (M) - Response Table with Assigned Points for Each Statement



## BURNOUT PREVENT

After calculating the score for each statement, all the points should be added together. The total score should be referred to the scale to check the relevant general recommendations.

COR-SA tools provide both an overall burnout risk score and a detailed breakdown of specific psychosocial risk areas. Each of the nine core indicators consists of three targeted items (see table 1), enabling organisations to identify which areas may require particular attention and design tailored interventions.

You can also add up the points from the statements that belong to the same area (like unfair treatment or technostress). This helps to show which parts of the work environment might need more attention.

The recommendations are based either on the overall result (the total score from all of the statements) or on the results from individual areas, depending on where the problems are most visible.

### REMEMBER:

The results from **COR-SA (E)** and **COR-SA (M)** may be different – and that's completely normal. Employees and managers can see the same situation in different ways. That's why it's helpful to **compare the results from both tools** and then look at the recommendations together.

If employees say that a certain area is difficult or stressful, but managers don't see it as a problem, it's important to still take the employee's view seriously. After all, employees are the ones who know best what affects their daily work and well-being.

**COR-SA (M)** is a useful tool that shows how well managers are aware of the challenges their team may be facing. But when it comes to taking action and applying recommendations, the results from **COR-SA (E)** – the employee version – should be the main reference point.

## Score Ranges and General Recommendations

### 0-9 points - Low exposure to adverse psychosocial working conditions

Your result suggests that your team is operating in a rather supportive and healthy work environment, with a low risk of occupational burnout. This reflects the effectiveness of current initiatives and a mature organisational culture. It is advisable to continue implementing activities that support employee well-being and to monitor any changes occurring in the work environment.

Your overall score indicates that in your company there is a low risk of employees experiencing burnout. However there still may be some things you can improve. Read the detailed recommendations to check your unique configuration of problem areas.

### 10-16 points - Moderate exposure to adverse psychosocial working conditions

Your score indicates that there may already be some risk factors for burnout present in your organisation. While they are not currently severe, over time they may gradually increase stress levels and reduce



## BURNOUT PREVENT

employee wellbeing. Early intervention and preventive actions at this stage can help avoid the development of more serious organisational challenges.

Your overall score indicates that in your company there is a moderate risk of employees experiencing burnout. It means that there may be some things you can improve. Read the detailed recommendations to check your unique configuration of problem areas.

### **17-22 points - High exposure to adverse psychosocial working conditions**

This is a good time to introduce—or seriously consider—changes in your organisation. The result suggests that multiple psychosocial risk factors for burnout may be present, which could negatively affect team well-being, engagement, and performance. It is important to identify the main sources of stress as soon as possible and implement specific, targeted corrective measures.

Your overall score indicates that in your company there is a high risk of employees experiencing burnout. Read the detailed recommendations to verify which areas require your immediate attention and action.

### **23-27 points - Very high exposure to adverse psychosocial working conditions**

This result serves as a clear warning signal. Your team may be experiencing serious psychosocial strain, which could lead to burnout and health-related issues. It is crucial to implement immediate actions to reduce risk and improve the overall working environment. As someone responsible for organising work processes, you have a real influence on shaping the conditions in which your employees operate.

Read the detailed recommendations to get some ideas on where to start.

## **Problem Area Overviews and Recommended Actions**

### ***Unfair Treatment and Remuneration***

**A high score in this area may be a sign that employees** feel undervalued or exploited. High scores may indicate perceived inequality, lack of recognition, or unfair pay.

#### **Recommendations for organisational action:**

- Implement transparent pay and promotion systems and make sure that the employees are familiar with them.
- Train managers in fair treatment and inclusive leadership - e.g. provide bias-awareness workshops, inclusive decision-making training.

#### **How you can support the employees:**



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- 
- Recognise employees' contribution regularly both formally and informally - e.g., monthly team appreciation e-mails, handwritten "thank-you" notes.
- Include employees in decision-making processes that affect them.
- Conduct anonymous perception audits on fairness and recognition, e.g., regular pulse surveys with open-ended feedback.
- Introduce peer-nominated recognition programs, for example "employee of the month" - allow employees to nominate and vote for their peers anonymously.
- Arrange a safe space where employees can share their daily accomplishments, key contributions and receive feedback from their colleagues.

### ***Role Ambiguity***

High scores suggest unclear expectations, duties, or goals that may cause confusion or stress among employees.

#### **Recommendations for organisational action:**

- Clearly define job roles and responsibilities in writing, e.g., with role charters, visual role maps.
- Conduct regular one-on-one meetings to align expectations.
- Make sure to show how each role contributes to the bigger picture, e.g., create team impact maps or success stories.

#### **How you can support the employees:**

- Make sure the employees think their roles are understandable. Encourage them to ask questions and provide feedback when expectations feel unclear.
- Use onboarding and periodic check-ins to reduce ambiguity, e.g., create onboarding plans with review points.
- Provide clear documentation and access to up-to-date role descriptions and procedures.
- Recognize and address signs of confusion early through team retrospectives or anonymous feedback tools.

### ***Lack of Control Over Work***

**Elevated** scores reflect limited influence over work processes. This may indicate employees' frustration due to low autonomy.

#### **Recommendations for organizational action:**

- Allow flexible work hours or methods when feasible.
- Reduce micromanagement through coaching-based leadership, e.g., include solution-focused questions in 1:1 meetings.
- Introduce "flexible focus hours" - blocks of uninterrupted time for self-directed work, eg., 10-12 a.m. as silent hours.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- Test “self-led teams” with rotating leadership roles, e.g., weekly “team captain” or “decision leader”.

### How can you support the employees:

- Increase employee involvement in planning and decision-making.
- Empower teams to set their own goals or task priorities.
- Let teams vote on project approaches or task distributions, e.g., introduce online polls during team meetings.
- Offer transparency into higher-level decisions to help employees understand how their work connects to the bigger picture.

### *Poor Communication and Lack of Support*

High scores indicate difficulties in communication and weak social support. If this area is prominent, it likely affects psychological safety and collaboration.

### Recommendations for organizational action:

- Develop clear communication norms and regular feedback loops, e.g., team charters, agreed email response times.
- Train leaders in active listening, supportive communication and conflict de-escalation methods e.g., NVC (Nonviolent Communication).
- Offer regular “office hours” for managers to ensure open-door support, e.g., 2-hour weekly manager drop-in sessions.

### How can you support the employees:

- Implement peer mentoring or support circles, e.g., buddy system for new hires, monthly reflection groups.
- Foster a culture of psychological safety and openness, e.g., anonymous idea boards, leaders sharing failures.
- Start “communication rituals”: daily 10-min huddles or end-of-week reflections.
- Acknowledge and validate employee contributions during meetings to reinforce a supportive environment

### *Unjustified Pressure*

High scores may point to excessive demands, pace, or unrealistic expectations.

### Recommendations for organizational action:

Review workload distribution and adjust where needed - include task mapping, reallocation workshops.

- Set realistic deadlines and project scopes, e.g., planning sessions using story points or effort estimates.
- Promote reasonable and sustainable performance standards, e.g., cap weekly working hours or number of meetings.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- Monitor for signs of overwork and burnout, e.g., short weekly/monthly wellbeing check-ins.
- Organize team-based “priority pruning” sessions to eliminate low-impact tasks.
- Use task planning methods to manage overload, e.g., traffic-light (red/yellow/green) method, RICE score.
- Develop an internal “reasonable expectations charter” for deadlines and deliverables.
- Train teams in estimating work more realistically using agile tools.

### How can you support the employees:

- Acknowledge and validate concerns about workload during 1:1 or team check-ins.
- Help employees prioritize tasks by distinguishing between urgent and important items.
- Encourage taking regular breaks and using vacation days without guilt.

### *Value Misalignment*

High scores show a disconnect between personal and organisational values. If value dissonance is high, employees’ motivation and sense of meaning may be eroding.

### Recommendations for organizational action:

- Communicate the organisation’s mission and values clearly - integrate them into onboarding and team rituals.
- Allow ethical discussions and feedback on value-related conflicts.
- Regularly assess whether company actions match its stated values.
- Co-create or refresh the company mission with employee input.

### How can you support the employees:

- Engage employees in shaping organizational culture
- Support employees in identifying meaningful aspects of their work.
- Facilitate “values alignment workshops” where employees map their values to the organization’s e.g., guided exercises in small groups.
- Encourage purpose-sharing storytelling (e.g. “Why I do what I do” sessions).

### *Discrimination*

High scores indicate perceived inequality or exclusion based on identity or status. Elevated scores are red flags for unsafe or exclusionary environments.

### Recommendations for organizational action:

- Enforce strong and clear anti-discrimination and inclusion policies and assure their accessibility e.g., by putting related visuals in the office.
- Provide mandatory and regular diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) trainings.
- Establish anonymous reporting mechanisms for reporting microaggressions or bias.
- Promote inclusive leadership and diversity in recruitment and promotion.



- Celebrate diversity via inclusive calendars and employee-led cultural events.

**How can you support the employees:**

- Listen actively and without judgment when someone shares an experience of exclusion or bias.
- Speak up if you witness discriminatory behavior, even in subtle forms like jokes or offhand comments.
- Encourage team norms that value respectful communication and diverse perspectives.

***Work-Life Conflict***

High scores suggest difficulty in balancing job demands with personal life. When this area is problematic, employees' fatigue and resentment can grow quickly.

**Recommendations for organizational action:**

- Offer flexible working arrangements, e.g., remote work days, flexible start/finish hours.
- Encourage respect for personal time, for example by avoiding after-hours communication.
- Develop a "team agreement" on communication, availability and flexibility norms.
- Establish no-meeting days or "deep work" blocks.
- Encourage (i.e. through modeling) healthy boundary-setting, e.g., no after-hours messages policy.

**How can you support the employees:**

- Respect working hours – avoid sending non-urgent messages during evenings or weekends.
- Be open to discussing workload adjustments if personal responsibilities affect availability.
- Normalize taking breaks and using time off – talk openly about your own boundaries and rest habits.

***Technostress***

A common but underestimated risk—especially in digital-heavy environments. High scores indicate digital overload or difficulty managing tech-related demands.

**Recommendations for organizational action:**

- Offer digital hygiene and focus management education/workshops for the staff.
- Limit unnecessary digital tools or notifications.
- Run a "digital wellbeing audit" and redesign tech use across the team.
- Use asynchronous communication over constant instant messaging.
- Host "tech-free" breaks if possible.

**How can you support the employees:**

- Train employees in managing emails, apps, and virtual meetings.
- Encourage setting personal "notification-free" periods during the day to focus.
- Check in about digital fatigue during team retrospectives or 1:1s.

**Managing psychosocial risk - The key to preventing burnout**



## BURNOUT PREVENT

If you are a manager, team leader, or someone responsible for organising work processes, you have the possibility of creating comfortable work conditions. Even small improvements in communication, task planning, or how challenges are addressed can have a meaningful impact.

That's why the following step-by-step guide has been developed – to help you manage psychosocial risks within your team. Each phase is supported with practical examples, which can be adapted to the specific context of your organisation.

The first and most important step in preventing burnout is the effective management of **psychosocial risk**. Psychosocial risk refers to the likelihood that unfavourable psychosocial working conditions will lead to negative outcomes—both in terms of mental and physical health, as well as professional functioning (Merecz et al., 2011, p. 14, after Cox, Griffiths & Rial-Gonzalez, 2006).

In practice, this means that factors such as excessive pressure, role ambiguity, or lack of social support – if they persist over time and exceed an employee's capacity to manage them – can lead to serious health consequences, including burnout.

### How to manage psychosocial risk - 5 key stages with practical tips

Effective psychosocial risk management is a process that can be broken down into **five essential stages**. Each of these can be successfully implemented by managers, team leaders, or HR professionals as part of everyday organisational management and a conscious effort to support employee well-being.

The following stages are based on the recommendations published by the **Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine**.

#### Stage 1: Risk Assessment

The first step is understanding which aspects of the work environment may be psychologically or organisationally burdensome for employees. It's important to identify both what is perceived as **stressful** or **frustrating** and what **motivates and supports** employees in their day-to-day work. Identifying these resources allows you to consciously protect and strengthen them.

Every team is unique, so it's best to gather insights directly from its members. Avoid assumptions—ask open and curious questions like:

- What works well?
- What gets in the way?
- What needs to change?

**How to gather information:**



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- **Anonymous surveys** (e.g. online) or open-ended questionnaires (e.g. “Which elements of your daily work feel most burdensome?”).
- **One-on-one or team discussions** in a friendly and safe atmosphere.
- **Observation of indicators** like frequent absences, reduced engagement, or rising conflicts.
- **Review of task allocation** - Is the workload evenly distributed? Are roles clearly defined?

You can also use established tools like **CORSA (E)** (for employees) and **CORSA (M)** (for managers), or develop your own list of psychosocial stressors tailored to your sector or team.

### Tip for Managers:

Before jumping into solutions, observe your team’s day-to-day functioning. Often, actions speak louder than data. Consider what questions you truly need answered and choose the right tools accordingly. This ensures you collect reliable insights that help you understand what really affects employee well-being.

### Stage 2: Action planning

Once you understand the key stressors, the next step is to plan appropriate actions—ones that are feasible and tailored to the specific needs of your team. Avoid vague intentions or long-term postponements. Instead, break the plan down into **concrete steps** aligned with organisational capabilities.

This is a time for **strategic thinking**:

- What can be improved?
- Who should be involved?
- What resources are available?

Consider:

- Which areas need urgent action, and which can change gradually?
- Are actions aligned with what employees have raised?
- Do you need external support (e.g. trainer, psychologist, HR)?
- How will you know if the action worked?

### Tip for Managers:

Plans can be made independently or with the team, other managers, or mental health specialists. Prioritise the most urgent issues, identify specific solutions, assign responsibility, and set deadlines. Focus on **realistic goals**—small steps in the right direction are better than ambitious plans that never materialise. Realism builds trust and engagement.



### Stage 3: Implementation

Change doesn't require a revolution. Small, consistent improvements often yield the best results. What matters most is that the actions match your plan and genuinely address team needs—not just surface-level fixes.

This stage is about **turning intentions into action**—reducing stressors, enhancing resources, and improving psychosocial working conditions.

#### Potential actions:

- **Organisational changes:** clearer division of roles, realistic timelines, transparent procedures.
- **Work environment adjustments:** reduce noise, overload, or constant interruptions.
- **Soft skills training:** communication, assertiveness, stress management—keep them short, practical, and open.
- **Supporting psychological resources:** screen breaks, quiet zones, flexible hours, “focus time” with no meetings.
- **Psychological support:** offering access to a psychologist or mental health advisor (e.g. consultations, counselling).
- **Off-site activities:** stress management workshops or relaxation training outside the office may be more effective and reduce perceived pressure.

#### Practical example:

If employees report communication chaos, work together to define clear rules—e.g. no messages after work hours, one task platform (e.g. email or Teams only), or which updates should go to everyone.

If feedback is lacking, introduce short regular 1:1 meetings or a feedback checkpoint after each project. These low-cost actions can significantly improve collaboration and support.

### Stage 4: Evaluation

After some time, review whether the changes are having the desired impact. This crucial step highlights successes and identifies areas that need tweaking. A well-conducted evaluation not only shows what works—it also builds trust and reinforces that the changes were worthwhile.

Evaluation should cover both the **implementation process** and **results**—did actions go as planned, and did they truly improve conditions and well-being?

#### Ways to evaluate:

- **Re-collect employee feedback** (surveys, interviews) to compare with the baseline.
- **Assess work perception** - do employees feel less stressed, more engaged, and supported?
- **Review organisational indicators** - e.g. fewer absences, better team climate, reduced turnover.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

- **Health and wellbeing assessment** - fewer stress symptoms, better sleep, improved mood?
- **Internal summary** - team meetings or reports: what worked, what didn't, and what to continue or change?

### Timing matters:

Some effects (e.g. clearer communication) appear quickly. Others (e.g. improved mental health) take time. Don't evaluate too early—or too late. Plan this stage thoughtfully.

### Tip for Managers:

Make evaluation a **regular part of the process**, not a one-off check. Truly effective actions are those that sustain their benefits. If improvements fade, use the moment to refresh or adapt your approach.

### Stage 5: Organisational learning

Don't just fix what's broken—nurture what works. Embedding good practices makes psychosocial risk management part of organisational culture, not a crisis response. It's also a chance for teams to learn from experience and strengthen positive behaviour patterns.

This stage is about **continuous learning and development**. Evaluation becomes a **starting point**, not an endpoint, for further improvement.

### Consider:

- **Sharing success stories** - in team meetings, onboarding materials, or internal training.
- **Regular workplace reviews** - even short quarterly check-ins can catch early warning signs.
- **Creating space for conversations** - e.g. opening meetings with "What's helping you today?"
- **Encouraging reflection and shared learning** - quick project summaries or lessons learned each quarter.
- **Sustaining effective activities** - e.g. repeating workshops, running refresher sessions, or reminding staff of support resources.

### Example:

If stress management workshops proved effective, consider repeating them regularly—as refreshers, knowledge boosters, or team-building activities.

### Tip for Managers:

Not everything has to work perfectly from day one. What matters most is that solutions are observed, adjusted, and strengthened based on team experience. Remember—**psychosocial risk management is a process**. Each assessment is an opportunity to grow, not a test to pass.



## BURNOUT PREVENT

You can start managing psychosocial risks with **simple steps**. It doesn't require massive resources or structural changes. The essentials are **awareness, consistency, and open dialogue**. With a mindful approach, you can not only prevent burnout but build a healthier, more supportive work environment based on **trust, openness, and mutual respect**.



## Appendix

### 1. COR-SA (E) tool

#### Directons

This tool concerns the identification of psychosocial hazards in the workplace that may contribute to the development of occupational burnout. These hazards are a source of stress for employees and are predisposing factors for reduced psychological well-being and work efficiency.

We want to emphasize that the purpose of this tool is not to point out mistakes or evaluate your work, but to reliably identify areas of concern. Marking these risks is crucial so that appropriate action can be taken to eliminate them or minimize their risks.

Please respond according to your experiences in your organization.

	Symptoms/Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I receive the recognition I deserve for my work.					
2.	Considering all my efforts and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately.					
3.	Compared to my colleagues, I have inadequate amount of work responsibilities.					
4.	The expectations placed on me at work are not clear.					
5.	My workplace lacks clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					
6.	I'm unsure about how my role contributes to the overall goals of my company.					
7.	I perform my work tasks in my preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					
8.	My work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.					
9.	I can have influence on the decisions related to my work in the company					



BURNOUT PREVENT

10.	I receive support if I encounter difficulties with my tasks.					
11.	It is hard for me to communicate with my supervisors when it's needed.					
12.	Communication with my associates is insufficient.					
13.	Excessive duties force me to maintain a high working pace.					
14.	I'm unable to use all of my vacation days because of my work responsibilities.					
15.	I feel time and/or performance pressure.					
16.	I have to make decisions that do not align with my beliefs and values.					
17.	I do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18.	I think my work contributes to something meaningful.					
19.	My superiors and my colleagues communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					
20.	My clients/patients/customers communicate with me in an uncivilised manner.					
21.	I feel discriminated at work (because of my gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					
22.	My work negatively affects my private life.					
23.	It is expected to work overtime in my workplace.					
24.	I have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying					



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

	to texts and phone calls) with my workplace even in my free time.					
25.	I feel the pressure not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes in my workplace.					
26.	In my workplace, there is a lack of training that would help me adapt to modern technologies.					
27.	I fear that modern technologies could easily replace me in my job.					

2. COR-SA (M) tool

**Directions**

This tool concerns the identification of psychosocial hazards in the workplace that may contribute to the development of occupational burnout. These hazards are a source of stress for employees and are predisposing factors for reduced psychological well-being and work efficiency.

We want to emphasize that the purpose of this tool is not to point out mistakes or evaluate your work, but to reliably identify areas of concern. Marking these risks is crucial so that appropriate action can be taken to eliminate them or minimize their risks.

Please answer honestly and accurately, as this will allow you to effectively plan solutions to foster stress reduction in the team and reduce the risk of burnout among employees. Your input is truly invaluable in building a more supportive and healthy work environment.

Please respond according to your company's policies.

Symptoms/Indicators	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. The employees receive the recognition they deserve for their work.					
2. Considering all their efforts and achievements in their job, I feel that the employees get paid appropriately.					
3. The responsibilities are fairly divided among the employees.					
4. I make sure that my expectations are clear to the employees.					
5. In our company we follow clear procedures for carrying out tasks.					



BURNOUT PREVENT

6.	I make sure that the employees are aware of how their role contributes to the overall goals of the company.					
7.	The employees perform their work tasks in their own preferred way (working pace, breaks, order of activities).					
8.	The employees' work breaks are interrupted by urgent matters.					
9.	The employees can have influence on the decisions associated with their work.					
10.	The employees receive support if they encounter difficulties with their tasks.					
11.	I try to make it easy for the employees to reach to me when they need it.					
12.	Communication between the employees is insufficient.					
13.	Excessive duties force the employees to maintain a high working pace.					
14.	The employees are unable to use all of their vacation days because of work responsibilities.					
15.	There is a culture of racing in my company.					
16.	The employees have to make decisions that do not align with their beliefs and values.					
17.	The employees do not identify with some of the values represented by my company.					
18.	I try to emphasize how the employees' work contributes to something meaningful.					
19.	In my company people communicate with each other in an uncivilised manner.					
20.	Clients/patients/customers communicate with the employees in an uncivilised manner.					



**BURNOUT PREVENT**

21.	The employees experience discrimination at work (because of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)					
22.	I observe that the employees' work negatively affects their personal lives.					
23.	The employees are expected to work overtime.					
24.	The employees have to remain in constant contact (checking e-mails, replying to texts and phone calls) with their workplace even in their free time.					
25.	There is a pressure among the employees not to fall behind the rapid pace of technological changes.					
26.	The employees complain about the lack of training that would help them adapt to modern technologies.					
27.	Modern technologies are seen by the employees as a threat to their job security.					

**3. Result calculation form**

Statement n°	Point Value	Total	Problem Area
1.			<i>Unfair treatment and remuneration</i>
2.			
3.			
4.			<i>Role ambiguity</i>
5.			
6.			
7.			<i>Lack of control over work</i>
8.			
9.			
10.			<i>Poor communication and lack of support</i>
11.			
12.			



BURNOUT PREVENT

13.			<i>Unjustified pressure</i>
14.			
15.			
16.			<i>Value misalignment</i>
17.			
18.			
19.			<i>Discrimination</i>
20.			
21.			
22.			<i>Work-life conflict</i>
23.			
24.			
25.			<i>Technostress</i>
26.			
27.			
DISCLAIMER: REVERSE SCORING APPLIES TO SOME OF THE STATEMENTS			<i>General score</i>

# Training Satisfaction Survey



## SMART SKILLS FOR BURNOUT-FREE SMES

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR TRAINING!

PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO COMPLETE THIS ANONYMOUS SURVEY. YOUR FEEDBACK IS VALUABLE AND WILL SUPPORT THE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BURNOUT PREVENTION INITIATIVES WITHIN THE PROJECT.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE TRAINING?

- VERY POOR
- POOR
- AVERAGE
- GOOD
- EXCELLENT

HOW USEFUL WAS THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED DURING THE TRAINING?

- NOT USEFUL
- SLIGHTLY USEFUL
- MODERATELY USEFUL
- USEFUL
- VERY USEFUL

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE TRAINER'S DELIVERY AND EXPERTISE?

- VERY POOR
- POOR
- AVERAGE
- GOOD
- EXCELLENT

DID THE TRAINING METHODS (E.G., PRESENTATIONS, EXERCISES, DISCUSSIONS) ENGAGE YOU?

- NOT AT ALL
- SLIGHTLY
- SOMEWHAT
- QUITE A BIT
- VERY MUCH

WHICH PART(S) OF THE TRAINING DID YOU FIND THE MOST VALUABLE AND WHY?

---

---

ARE THERE ANY TOPICS OR SKILLS YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE FURTHER IN THE FUTURE?

---

---



# Notebook

## TIPS & TRICKS TO COMBAT STRESS

### *for employees*

#### Quick Tension Zap

Channel your inner detective - clench each muscle group (fists, shoulders, face) for 5 seconds, then let them flop. It's like Jacobson's relaxation on turbo mode!

#### Hit the Instant Reset Button

The moment you feel pressure spike, pause and run a rapid recharge: try 4-7-8 breathing, a 60-second body scan, or a standing stretch. It's your quick circuit-breaker to steer back to calm.

#### Mindful Mood Check

Every hour, pause 60 seconds to notice your breath, sensations, or a nearby sound - no judgment, just you in the moment. Exercise your senses!

## NOTES & FREE THOUGHTS

---

---

---

---

---

## TIPS & TRICKS TO BOOST COMMUNICATION

### *for managers*

#### Foster Open Dialogue

Schedule brief, regular check-ins where you genuinely ask "What's weighing on you?" and listen without judgment - creating a safe space for team members to share stress before it builds.

#### Balance Feedback with Empathy

When offering guidance, pair a specific observation ("I noticed the report ran late") with a collaborative question ("How can I support you to hit deadlines more comfortably?") to jointly solve the problem.

#### Build Rituals That Connect

Introduce quick team rituals - like a two-minute "wins & worries" round at each meeting - to normalize sharing challenges, reinforce peers' support, and remind everyone they're in it together.

## NOTES & FREE THOUGHTS

---

---

---

---

---







# Smart Skills for Burnout-Free SMEs

## OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT

Burnout is a gradual state of work-related exhaustion that lowers motivation, health, and job performance. Recognizing its signs - fatigue, detachment, and reduced effectiveness - helps managers and employees prevent serious consequences. Early action and support are key to maintaining wellbeing and productivity in the workplace.

**Burnout often begins unnoticed and builds slowly, making it hard to detect without self-awareness.**

# 1

# 2

## PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

Psychosocial risks in the workplace refer to sources of stress related to how work is organized, relationships with others, or the conditions in which we work. These may include unclear responsibilities, poor communication, time pressure, or lack of support — but whether they become a real risk depends on the individual employee's response, that is, whether the situation causes them stress.



**Stress is more about how you see things, not just what happens.**

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

# 3

Stress is a natural response that can be either helpful or harmful, depending on its intensity and duration. Recognizing the signs of stress early and applying appropriate techniques — for example, relaxation methods or mindfulness — can help prevent burnout and support mental resilience in the workplace.

## COMMUNICATION

# 5

### COR-SA (M) & (E)

To prevent burnout, we encourage you to use the COR-SA tools. The employee version offers a full assessment, while the manager version adds valuable insight when used together. Comparing both helps identify key psychosocial risks and improve well-being across the team. Let's take action to support a healthier work environment!

# 4

Effective communication enhances team well-being, trust, and resilience — all of which are essential for preventing burnout. It strengthens collaboration, boosts morale, and increases job satisfaction while reducing employee turnover. Active listening, and clear feedback are everyday tools that support healthier workplace relationships.



# Occupational burnout

## What is burnout?

“Burnout is a persistent, negative work-related state that occurs in generally healthy individuals. It is primarily characterised by exhaustion, accompanied by psychological and physical discomfort, a sense of reduced effectiveness, lowered motivation, and dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work. This state develops gradually and results from a mismatch between professional intentions and occupational realities. Burnout is often a self-perpetuating process due to inadequate coping strategies.”

(Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998)

## Stages

Honeymoon phase -  
the stage of enthusiasm

Awakening phase -  
a “reality check”

Irritability phase - deterioration  
of interpersonal relationships

Full burnout phase -  
physical and mental exhaustion

Recovery phase -  
gradually rebuilding resource

### PSYCHOLOGICAL DOMAIN

Overwhelm,  
lack of drive,  
low  
motivation,  
and  
workplace  
cynicism.

### PHYSICAL DOMAIN

Fatigue,  
headaches,  
tension,  
sleep issues,  
and digestive  
problems.

### SOCIAL DOMAIN

Social  
withdrawal,  
conflicts,  
impatience,  
and avoiding  
meetings.

Individual causes of  
burnout: high empathy,  
neuroticism, chronic stress,  
work-life imbalance

Organisational causes of  
burnout: workload, lack of  
control, poor rewarding,  
poor communication,  
injustice

**Consequences** of occupational burnout syndrome for the employee: chronic fatigue, physical and mental health problems, reduced job satisfaction

**Consequences** of occupational burnout syndrome for the organisation: decreased work performance, increased absenteeism, lower commitment, financial costs



# Psychosocial Risks in the Workplace



## What are Psychosocial Risks?

**Psychosocial risks refer to aspects of work design, management, and environment that may cause psychological, social, or physical harm.**

- ➔ These are not inherently harmful – it is the employee's perception that turns a neutral factor into a psychosocial risk.
- ➔ Perception is shaped by personality, experience, resilience, and coping skills.

## Types

### Work Content Factors ("hard factors")

- Environment & equipment
- Task design
- Workload & pace
- Schedule

### Work Context Factors ("soft/background factors")

- Organisational culture
- Role in organisation
- Career development
- Decision-making
- Relationships
- Work-life interface

Burnout is linked to communication problems, role ambiguity, unfair reward systems, constant time pressure, low autonomy, value conflict.

## CONSEQUENCES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

### For individuals:

- Physical: headaches, fatigue, tension
- Emotional: anxiety, low mood, irritability
- Cognitive: poor focus, low motivation
- Behavioral: absenteeism, withdrawal, risk-taking, substance use

### For organisations:

- Higher sick leave and turnover
- Reduced productivity and engagement
- Poor team dynamics
- Resistance to change

## Prevention – 3 Levels (Merecz et al., 2011)

**Primary:** Prevent risks before they occur, e.g. realistic expectations, supportive culture

**Secondary:** Help employees cope with stress, e.g. stress management training, flexible planning

**Tertiary:** Support after harm has occurred, e.g. counselling, rehab programs, flexible work



# Stress - how it works and how we cope with it

## What is stress?

Stress is a natural reaction of the body – it can boost energy and motivation (eustress), but it can also become harmful when it lasts too long (distress).

THE GOAL IS NOT TO ELIMINATE STRESS ENTIRELY, BUT TO UNDERSTAND IT BETTER AND LEARN HOW TO MANAGE IT EFFECTIVELY.

### Stress can affect us in different ways:

- In the short term: increased energy and focus – helpful, for example, before a public performance.
- In the long term: chronic fatigue, muscle tension, sleep disturbances, weakened immunity, and reduced concentration.

## SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

### Emotional, e.g.,

- fear, anxiety
- irritability, impulsiveness
- anger, outbursts of rage
  - loss of control over emotions
- feeling overwhelmed, confused

### Physiological, e.g.,

- muscle tension
- different pains
- respiratory symptoms
- digestive disorders
- somatic diseases

### Cognitive, e.g.,

- memory problems, difficulty concentrating
- difficulty in processing and remembering information
- disorientation, difficulty in organising thoughts

## Stress management Techniques

### Relaxation techniques

- Progressive muscle relaxation (Jacobson's method) - Involves tensing and relaxing muscle groups one by one to recognise and release tension. Helps reduce stress-related symptoms like muscle tightness or insomnia.
- Autogenic training (Schultz's method) - Uses self-suggested phrases focused on body sensations (e.g., "my hand is heavy") to induce calm and reduce emotional tension. Supports relaxation and concentration.

### Breathing techniques - how do they work?

Breathing techniques involve consciously controlling the rhythm and depth of breathing, which influences the nervous system and the level of tension in the body. These techniques help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing stress.

### Mindfulness (awareness)

Mindfulness is a technique based on being consciously present in the here and now, without judgment. It involves focusing on the present moment – on the breath, bodily sensations, sounds, emotions – and observing them without trying to change or judge them.



# Communication and relationships



## DAILY PRACTICES

WHY DOES COMMUNICATION MATTER?

- ✓ BUILDS TRUST AND RESILIENCE
- ✓ PREVENTS BURNOUT
- ✓ SUPPORTS TEAMWORK AND MOTIVATION

WHAT IS SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION?

- ✓ ACTIVE LISTENING, EMPATHY, CLARITY
- ✓ BOOSTS ENGAGEMENT AND INNOVATION
- ✓ REDUCES MISUNDERSTANDINGS

## HOW TO GIVE BETTER FEEDBACK

BE SPECIFIC

- ✓ DESCRIBE ACTIONS, NOT TRAITS
- ✓ SHOW THE IMPACT
- ✓ SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS, NOT COMMANDS

✗ "YOU NEVER TRY" →

✓ "LET'S FIND A BETTER WAY TOGETHER"

## HOW DO WE CHANGE STRESSFUL MESSAGES?

✗ STRESSFUL: "YOU'RE ALWAYS LATE"

✓ SUPPORTIVE: "I'VE NOTICED DELAYS—CAN WE TALK ABOUT IT?"



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ✓ PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING
- ✓ GIVE REGULAR FEEDBACK
- ✓ PROPOSE ONE SMALL TEAM CHANGE TODAY
- ✓ BUILD A HEALTHIER, STRONGER TEAM

TONE MATTERS

SPEAK WITH, NOT AT



# COR-SA (E) & (M)

COR-SA (E) –  
Employee version



Together, these two tools provide comprehensive assistance in assessing the risk factors for burnout.



COR-SA (M) –  
Manager version

*They assess 9 psychosocial risk areas:*

Unfair Treatment & Compensation

Role Ambiguity

Lack of Control Over Work

Poor Communication & Lack of Support

Unjustified Pressure

Value Inconsistency

Discrimination

Technological Stress

## 5 KEY STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

### 1. Risk Assessment

- Gather information directly from employees
- Use tools like COR-SA (E/M), surveys, team meetings, and observation
- Ask: What works well? What gets in the way?

### 2. Action Planning

- Create realistic and targeted improvement plans
- Consider urgency, available resources, and who will be responsible

### 3. Implementation

- Apply practical changes (e.g., clearer communication, workload balance)
- Focus on actions that truly match team needs

### 4. Evaluation

- Reassess conditions through surveys or feedback
- Ask: Did stress decrease? Are employees more engaged?

### 5. Organisational Learning

- Keep what works and build it into the culture
- Share success stories and continue regular reviews

- ✓ Don't wait for problems to grow—act early
- ✓ Use the COR-SA tools to guide data-driven, realistic actions

- ✓ Focus on small, meaningful steps to build trust and well-being
- ✓ Prevention is ongoing—not a one-time fix

*Managing psychosocial risk isn't just solving problems—it's investing in a healthier, more supportive work culture.*

