



# Health and Wellbeing in the Hybrid World

Presented by Nick Thomas  
November 2021



# Introduction / Housekeeping

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Welcome and thankyou!

Webinar format – muted and video off. Interactive features – polls, Q&A

Slides and Recording will be made available post-session via the Council

## Nick Thomas

- Background in Insurance Broking Sector. Sales and Sales Leadership specialist
- Widely qualified coach and personal development specialist
- Coaching, training and consulting – Insurance M&A

## Nick Thomas & Associates

- Specialist training, coaching and consulting to the UK Insurance Sector
- Technical insurance, sales, business and soft skills, compliance training



# Content and Learning

*Begin with the end in mind'*

Stephen R.

Covey, 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People'

- The wellbeing challenges of remote working – pre-pandemic research and recent experience. Focus on 'burnout' and social isolation
- Work structure, distraction culture and personal responsibility
- The importance of psychological separation
- Building energy – The 'four doctors' and the 'high-performance pyramid'
- The true nature of stress and the balance of stressors
- The additional challenges of hybrid – the employer/employee disconnect
- Tools and techniques

# Social Isolation

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Two major threats to remote working identified pre-pandemic: social isolation/loneliness and Burnout

- US Study – State of Remote Work 2018: loneliness is the biggest struggle to working remotely.
- Growing epidemic – even before Covid-19
- Multiple studies show ‘robust’ link to premature mortality – Cigna Health equivalent effect to 15 cigarettes a day
- Personality types and isolation – extroverts often fare worse
- Reduced engagement with employer = reduced productivity
- Higher staff turnover



# Burnout – what is it?

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## World Health Organisation [WHO] – May 2019

- Burnout is included in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an **occupational phenomenon**. It is not classified as a medical condition
- ICD-11: *Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:*
  - *feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;*
  - *increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and*
  - *reduced professional efficacy*



# Burnout – main causes

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## Six main causes of burnout

- Unsustainable workload
- Perceived lack of control – micromanaged, lack of agency, autonomy
- Insufficient rewards for effort – pay equity etc.
- Loneliness and isolation - lack of a supportive community
- Lack of fairness – inequity and discrimination
- Mismatched values and skill

***‘Making a significant difference with burnout interventions’ Maslach, Leiter and Jackson***



# POLL

Your challenges  
with remote  
working



# Burnout and flexible working

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Research Paper on flexible work practices - pre-pandemic

Suggests employees (especially with families) are grateful for work 'flexibility'

- ...*'employees respond to the ability to work flexibly by exerting additional effort, in order to return benefit to their employer.'*
- Can go to extremes – lack of boundaries?
- Employer may intensify the workload with unrealistic timeframe requests
- Harder to spot the signs with remote workers
- Increased likelihood of burnout as remote working persists?....





# Wellbeing in pandemic

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## ‘Beyond Burned Out’ – HBR February 2021

- ‘Chronic stress was rampant even before the pandemic. Leaders can’t ignore it any longer’
- **Survey of 1,500 respondents in 46 countries, found:**
  - 89% of respondents said their work life was getting worse.
  - 85% said their wellbeing had declined.
  - 62% of people struggling to manage their workloads had often experienced burnout.
  - Only 2% rated wellbeing as excellent
- **Main issues:**
  - Workloads were not adjusted
  - Staff were not given more control and flexibility
  - The extent of people’s struggles went unrecognized

- **Workload**

- 30% more each day to hit pre-Covid goals
- Number meetings increased by 24%
- Average workday up by 48 minutes

*‘...more employees are blaming the virus for their burnout, citing it as responsible for increased workloads, lack of support, and unclear performance expectations’.*  
**‘Burnout – the Second Wave’ Korn Ferry**

# Wellbeing in pandemic

## Aviva Research of 220 UK Brokers - July 2021

- 65% [and 72% Regional Brokers] felt prolonged homeworking had negative effect on wellbeing or mental health. Reasons:
  - Difficulty communicating via remote channels
  - Difficulty administering policies remotely
  - **Isolation/removal from colleagues** [top for National Brokers – 40%]
- BUT 72% National Brokers and 58% Regional Brokers ‘wanted to spend half their time or more working from home’ in the future...



The screenshot shows the Insurance Times website. The main headline reads: "65% of brokers believe prolonged homeworking has had negative impact – Aviva". The article is attributed to "ageas". The website navigation includes: Home, News, Insight, Brokers, Insurers, Ratings, Research, Topics, Products, Events, and Expert View. There is also a search bar and a "FREE TRIAL | REGISTER" link.

# Distraction culture and remote work 'structure'

*'Media multi-taskers pay mental price'* Stanford 2016

- Multi-tasking destroys productivity

*'2018 Global Mobile Consumer Survey'* Deloitte

- People checked phones 52 a day on average
- Total 171 minutes
- Every three seconds doubles workplace error

**Johnson, Bailey 2018**

- Every distraction takes twenty-three minutes to get back on task *'The cost of interrupted work'* 2018
- After only twenty minutes of interrupted performance, people reported higher stress, frustration, workload, effort and pressure

Since this research was published, we have moved to remote working environments:

- Losing the structure of everyday office life
- Spending more time at our desks and on our screens, subject to the greater temptations of multi-tasking and distraction
- One in five workers say they have 'zero friends' [YouGov]
- 74% say this is loneliest they have ever felt

We need to take personal responsibility for our health, wellbeing, and workplace performance

# Prevention strategies

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## Revisit:

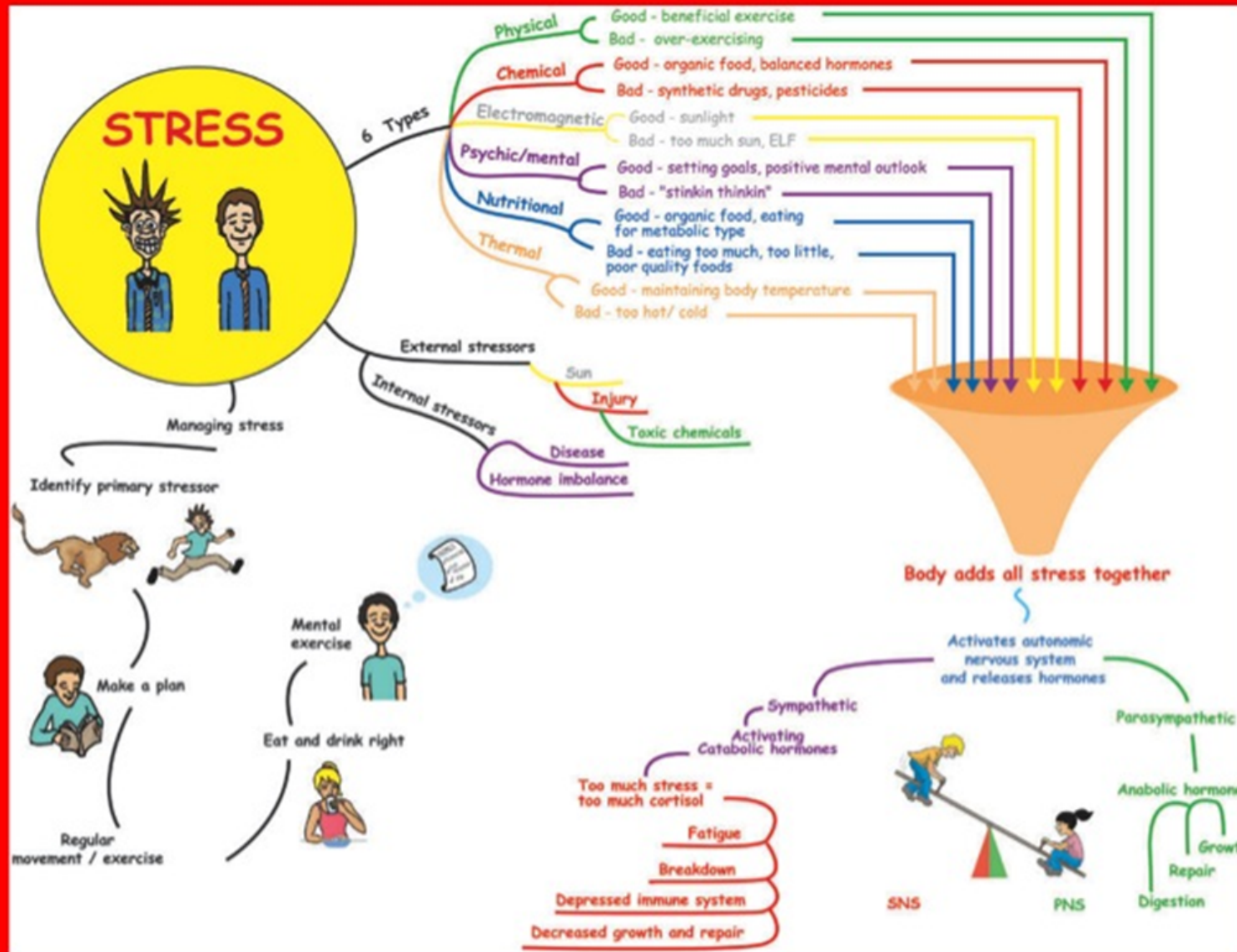
‘World Health Organisation [WHO] - 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)

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### Burnout - signs in others:

- Fatigue
- Withdrawal
- Increased irritability
- Increased sickness/lateness
- Disengagement



- *The 'balance of stressors'* - Paul Chek
- Nervous and hormonal systems cannot differentiate physical stress with emotional and mental stress [and subconscious cannot differentiate between real and imagined]
- Stress neither bad nor good – we need stress to grow physically, emotionally, mentally
- Lack of stress = atrophy
- Chronic stress = breakdown, sickness, burnout
- Fight/Flight – survival response. Short term diversion of resources.
- Modern world – chronic activation of SNS
- Look at balance of all types of stress to shift balance to PNS

# The four Doctors [you'll ever need]

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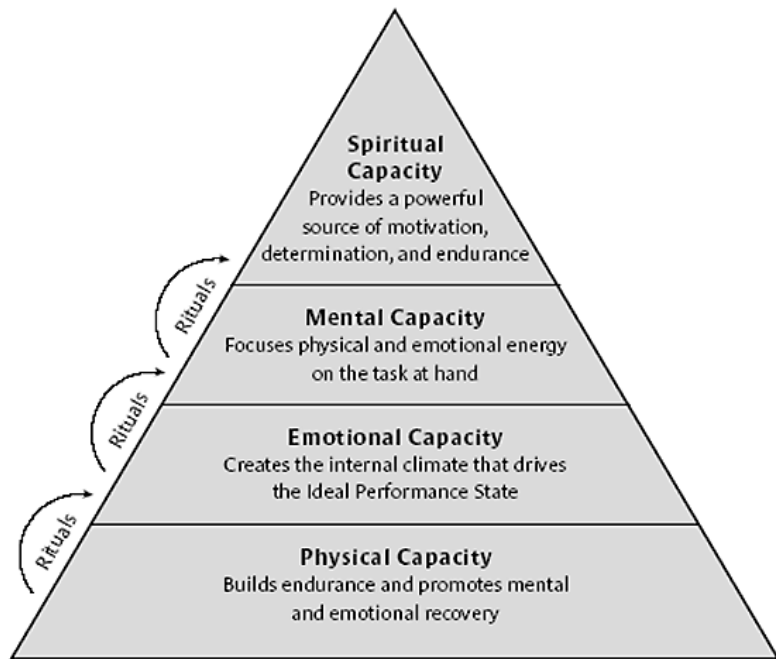
How do we build energy and manage chronic stress?

- **Dr Diet** – foundation for sustainable energy, repair and recovery. Avoid energy rollercoaster. Influences mental and emotional. Real food. Effect of sugar and stimulants. Hydration.
- **Dr Quiet** – energy management and recovery. Sleep and daytime rest and recovery to access PNS [healing state]. Chronic stress in turn hinders effective sleep and circadian cycle [melatonin and cortisol]. Accessing the present – breathing, mindfulness, meditation
- **Dr Happiness** – living a life fulfilling individual needs and core values. Harmonious vs obsessive passion
- **Dr Movement** – essential to get nutrients to and through our body, to move waste out of our bodies and to generate emotional stability and mental clarity. Pumping mechanisms of body – venous return. Improved cognitive performance. Neurogenesis and neuroplasticity. Additional benefits of outdoor movement and **play** – **sunlight** and mood enhancement, being in **nature**





# Oscillation



‘The High Performance Pyramid’ – **Loehr and Schwartz**

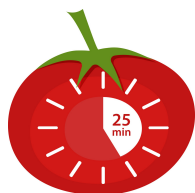
- ‘The Corporate Athlete’ – management and production of energy at all levels. How? **‘Oscillation’** – rhythmic expenditure [stress] and recovery of energy. Failure to do so = burnout and breakdown
- **Physical** – ‘supercompensation’ in weight training. No training = atrophy/overtraining = breakdown of muscles, injury, illness
- **Emotional** – peak performers are relaxed, calm and focused [‘flow’]. Negative emotions are toxic/**drain energy**. Poor decisions [see ‘The Chimp Paradox’]. Breathing, mindfulness, pattern interrupts, connection between motion and emotion. Music and nature – access right brain creativity.
- **Mental** – cannot be constantly ‘on’. Ability to switch between focus and relaxation at will. Importance of rituals. Visualisation – e.g., for meetings and presentations
- **Spiritual** – connecting with values, meaning and purpose. See Dan Pink ‘Drive’. Intrinsic motivation.

# Oscillation – Micro and Macro

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## Micro Recovery – build pitstops into your day

- Control and plan your day
- Do not work longer than 90 minutes without taking a break
- Mini-stretching, walking, phone call in garden
- Get Some Headspace: 2-10-minute breathing or mindfulness exercises throughout the day
- Feed The Engine : STOP for a healthy lunch
- Environmental: Nature, outdoors, animals, children
- Access flow state - turn off notifications, find a quiet, dedicated workspace. Focus on one activity at a time.



**Pomodoro Technique**  
*A series of sprints – not a marathon*

## Macro Recovery:

- Periodisation
- Think like an athlete, plan your recovery, plan your holidays, have it in the diary!
- Every 90 days plan a 4-day break
- Every 6 weeks a 2-day break

[Home](#) / [Psychology & Psychiatry](#)  
[Home](#) / [Neuroscience](#)



🕒 JULY 15, 2021

## Study shows that spending time outdoors has a positive effect on the brain

by Kerstin Skork, Elena Hungerland, Max Planck Society



# Setting yourself up to succeed

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## Psychological Separation

- Research shows drawing line between personal and professional is crucial for mental health
- WFH - no natural transition cues – e.g. commute. Need to create psychological separation (Ashworth, Arizona State University). Start and end of work routines e.g. workout, dog walk, shower, work clothes

## Digital Detox

- Is a meeting necessary?
- Does it have to be an online call?
- Walk and talk – benefits brain's cognitive function

### Four causes of Zoom Fatigue:

1. Excessive close eye contact – ‘when someone’s face is that close to ours in real life, our brains interpret it as an intense situation that is either going to lead to mating or to conflict...you’re in this hyper-aroused state’. Take Zoom out of the full-screen option and reduce the size of the Zoom window
2. Constantly viewing own image – unnatural and stressful. Turn off self-image
3. Dramatically reduces mobility due to close integral camera. Fit external camera at greater distance
4. Much higher cognitive load – ‘in video chats, we have to work harder to send and receive [non-verbal] signals. Take audio only break and turn away from screen

Professor Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of the Stanford Virtual Human Interaction Lab

# The future? Hybrid?

*The return to the workplace is a chance to create a new, more effective operating model that works for companies and people navigating a world of increasing uncertainty. There is, however, one big catch: employers must confront the broadening disconnect between how they and their employees see the future. 'It's time for leaders to get real about hybrid'. McKinsey*

- Nearly 90 % **C-suite executives** expected “core” employee to be back in the office three or more days a week
- Nearly three-quarters **employees** would like to work from home for two or more days per week, and more than half want at least three days despite the wellbeing challenges of remote working

## Employer – employee disconnect?

- Employers set on firm ‘finish line’
- Employees conflicted and unsure
- The ‘great resign’ – over forty percent workers globally considering leaving current employers by end of year



## The Work Trend Index - Microsoft

# Thankyou! Questions?

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