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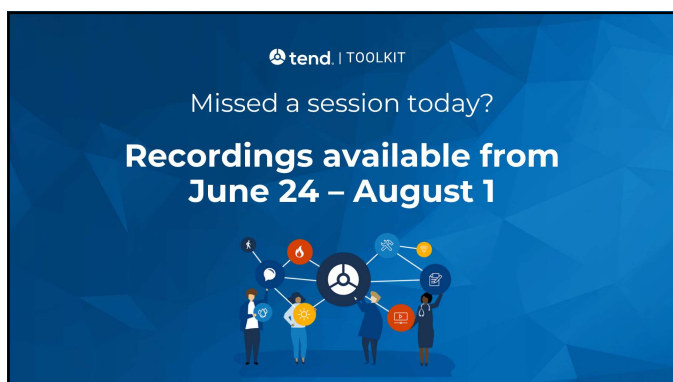
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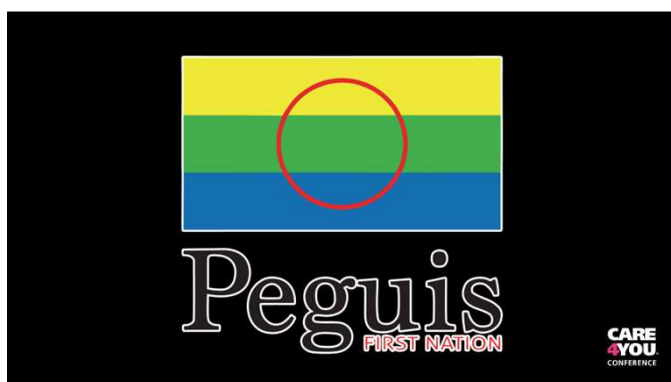
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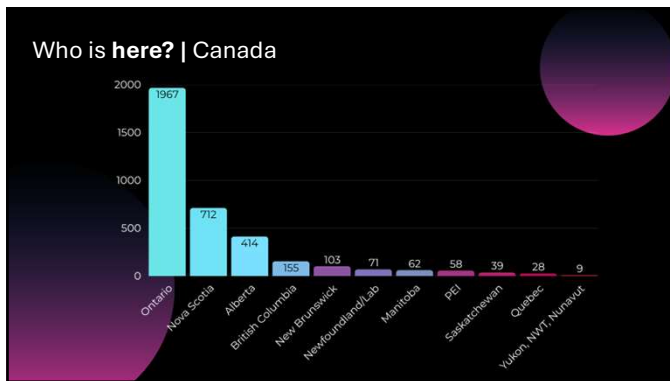
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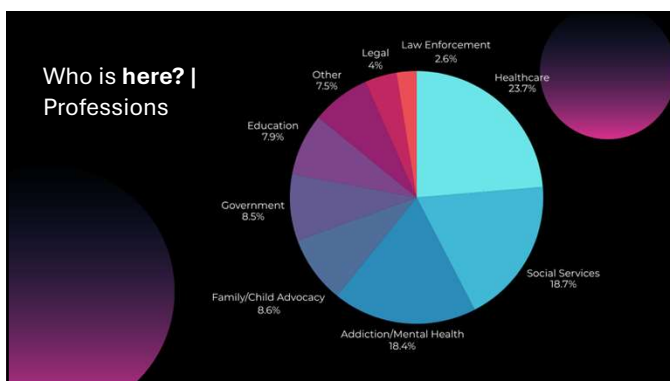
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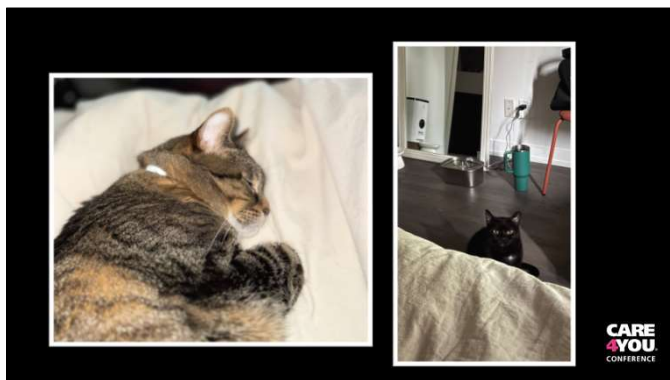
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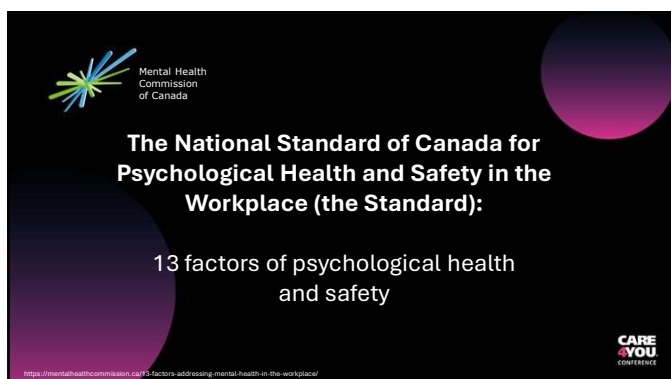
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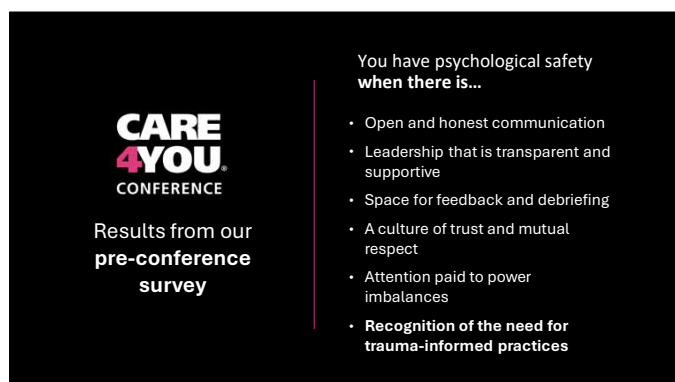
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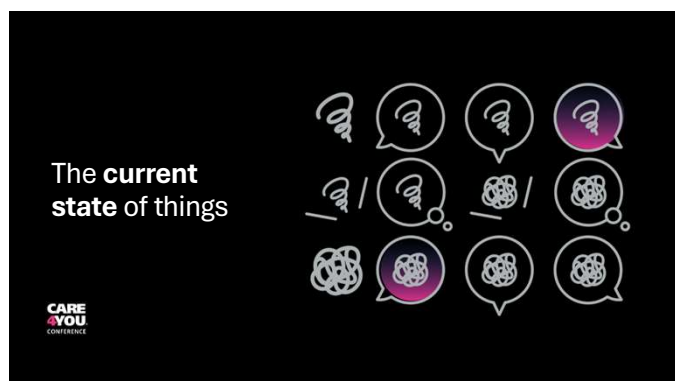
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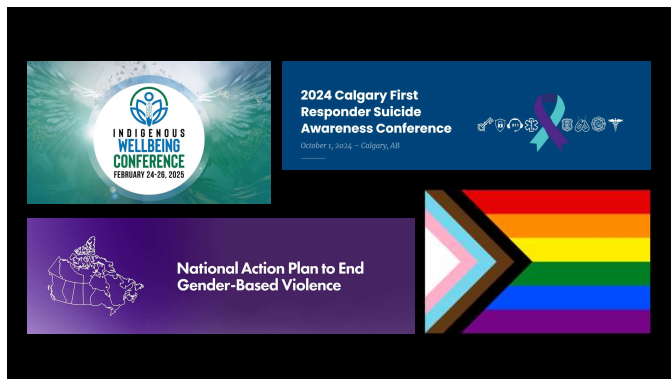
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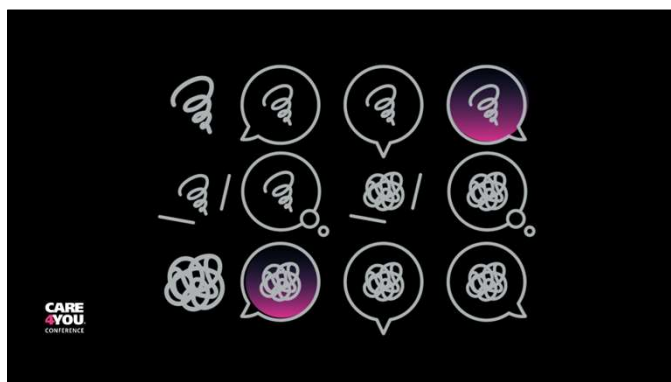
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**In the US, Gen Z have surpassed Baby Boomers in the workforce**

By the end of 2025, ~30% will be Gen Z

In Canada:

- Millennials will still be the largest group in the workforce (~33% of the working-age population).
- Gen Z will continue to grow and will make up a bigger part of the workforce (over 17% in 2021 and growing).

(DeMaria et al., 2024; Statistics Canada, 2024)

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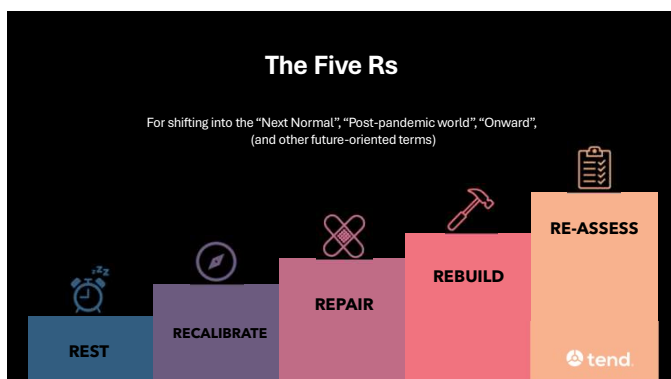
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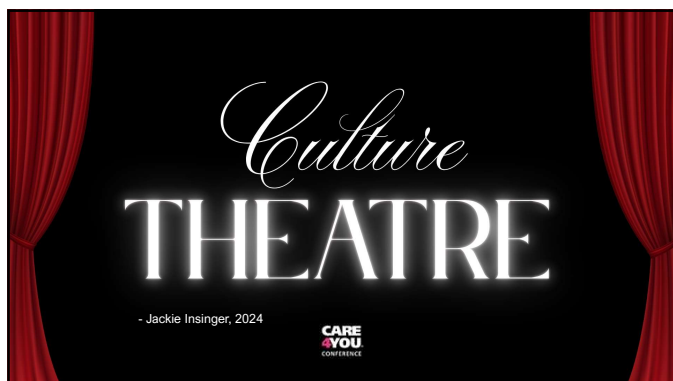
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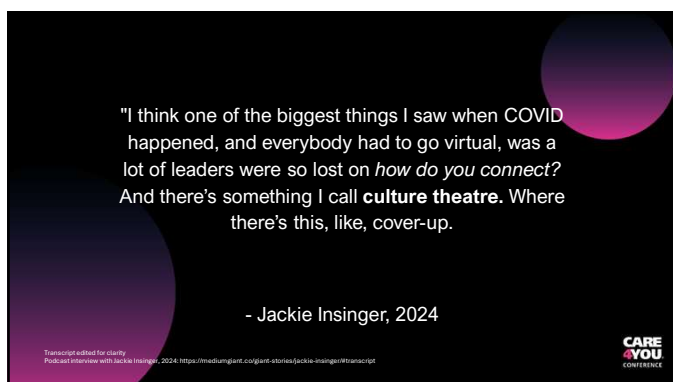
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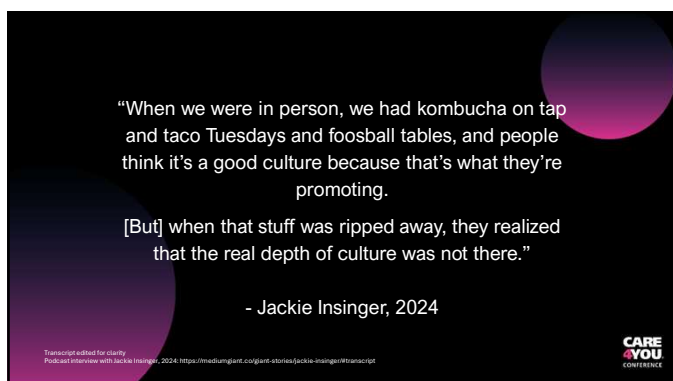
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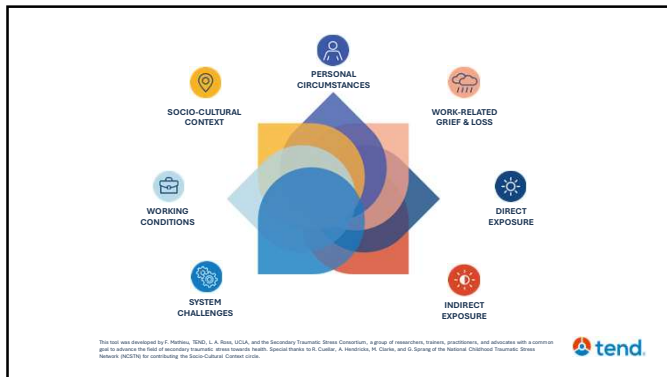
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2:00 PM ET - 3:15 PM ET

## Navigating Perfectionism, Stigma, and Shame

A Lawyer-Therapist's Perspective on Staying Well in Trauma-Exposed Work

**Doron Gold, BA, JD, MSW, RSW, CPC**

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**Socio-Cultural Context**

- Current crisis or cultural shift.
- Being asked to do things outside of your scope of work due to your culture, race, ethnicity, language, or identity.
- Lack of representation.



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**SOCIO-CULTURAL  
CONTEXT**



**tend.**

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**What is a  
high-stress, trauma-exposed workplace?**

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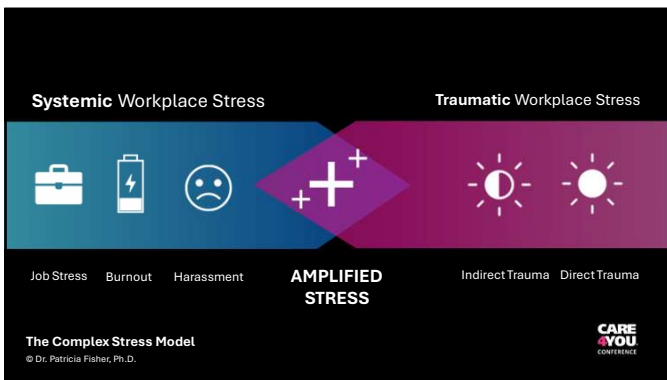
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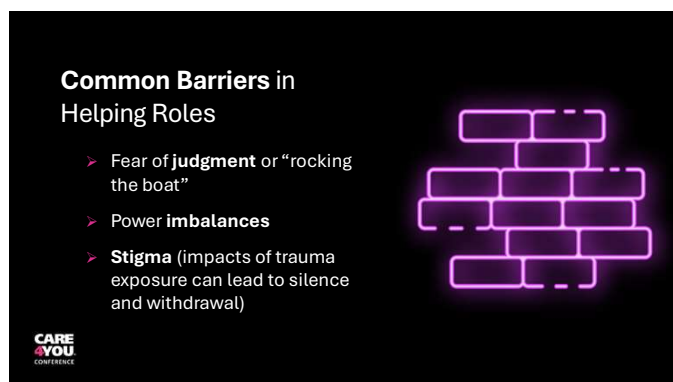
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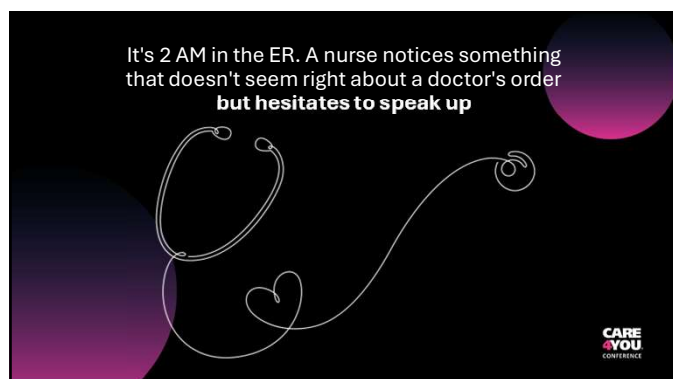
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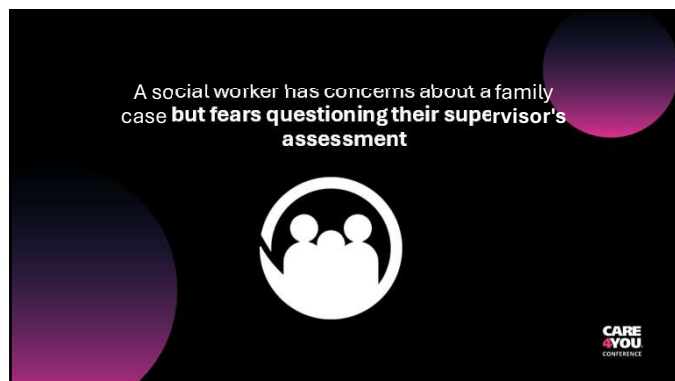
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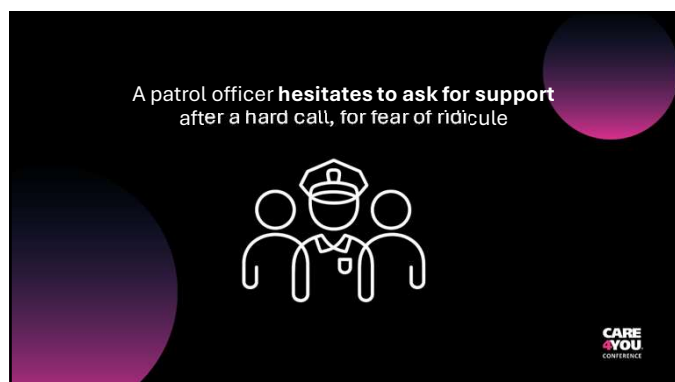
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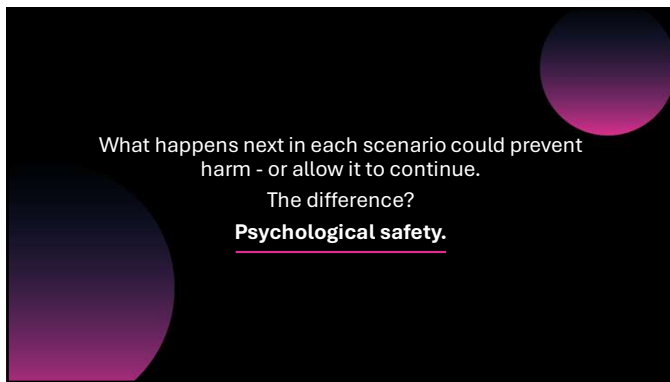
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What are the **costs** of not having a  
psychologically safe workplace?



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When you **have it**:

- Mistakes are opportunities to learn.
- I can take risks and fail.
- I can speak my mind.
- I can share my struggles.
- I trust my teammates and supervisors.

Grant, A. (2021). Think again: The power of knowing what you don't know. Viking.



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You have psychological safety  
when **people can...**

- Engage in generous interpretations



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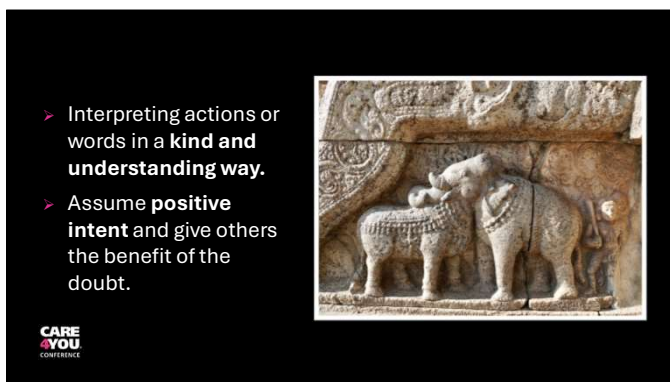
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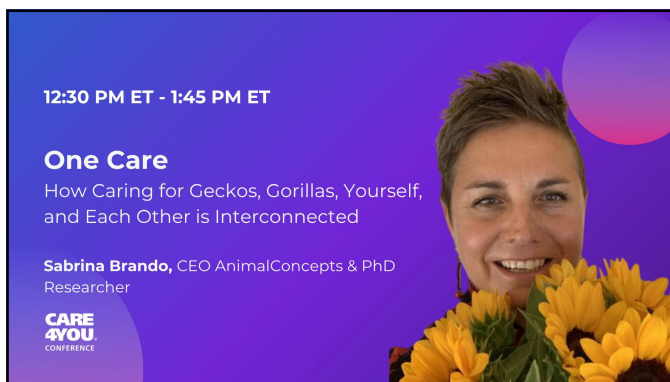
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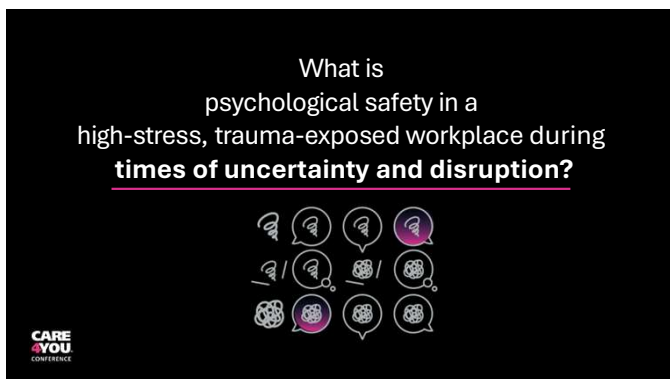
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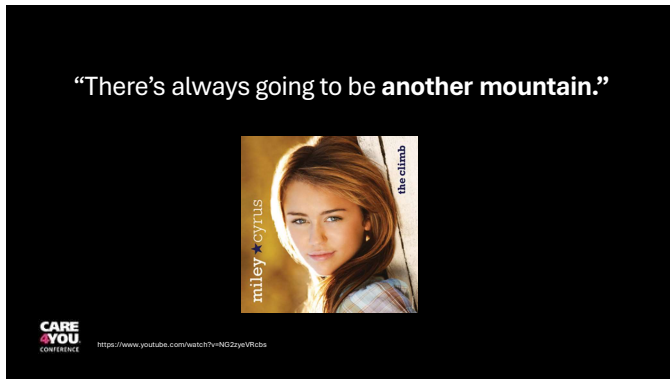
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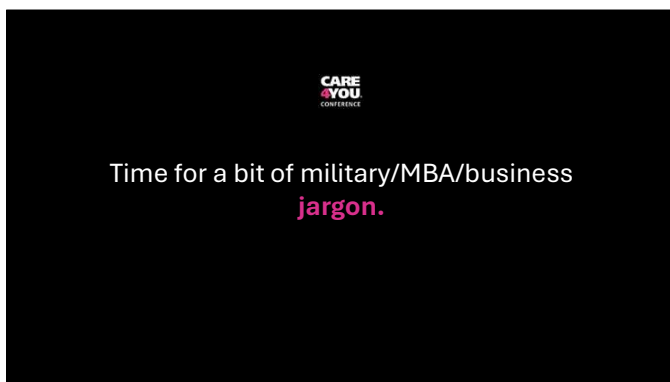
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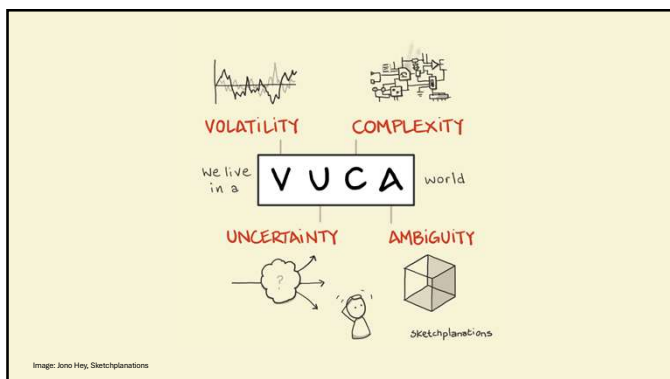
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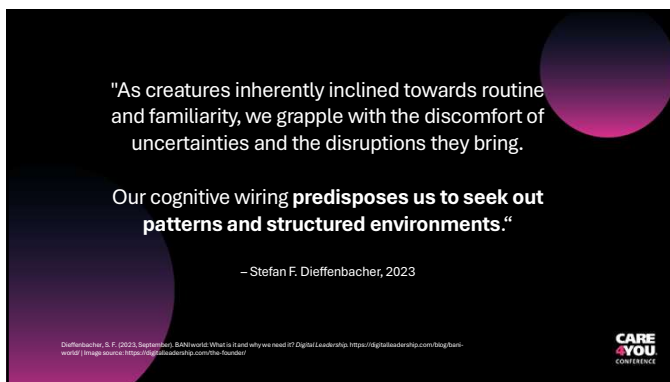
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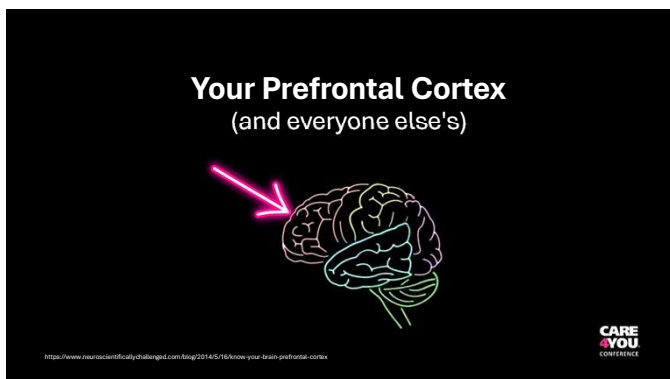
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- Reflexive behaviors
- Planning, decision-making, problem-solving, self-control
- Controls our ability to experience empathy for others



<https://www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com/blog/2014/5/16/know-your-brain-prefrontal-cortex>

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"Under extreme uncertainty, people tend to develop **threat rigidity** and a **degraded ability to interact and make decisions**.

They also **catastrophize**, filling a communications void with negative chatter, distorted interpretations, dire predictions, and fatalistic scenarios. [...]"

Timothy R. Clark, HBR, 2024



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**VOLATILITY**

Sudden changes or spikes in demand can be destabilizing

Image: Jono Hey, Sketchplanations

- **Rapid caseload increases** after a crisis
- **Community emergencies** (e.g., wildfires)



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### UNCERTAINTY



Lack of predictability due to shifting policies and unknown future. Basic cause & effect is known, **but not the outcome or timeline.**

Image: Jono Hey, Sketchplanations

- **Funding cuts**
- **Rapid policy changes** or community needs

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### COMPLEXITY



Many parts and variables interact. We have some information, but it can feel **overwhelming to manage.**

Image: Jono Hey, Sketchplanations

- **Multiple sectors involved** (justice, health, social services).
- **Competing priorities and ethical tensions.**

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### AMBIGUITY



No clear cause-effect or roadmap. **Truly unknown situations.**

Image: Jono Hey, Sketchplanations

- **Moral distress** due to unclear expectations.
- **Confusion around responsibilities**
- **e.g.: Impact of AI** in health & social services.

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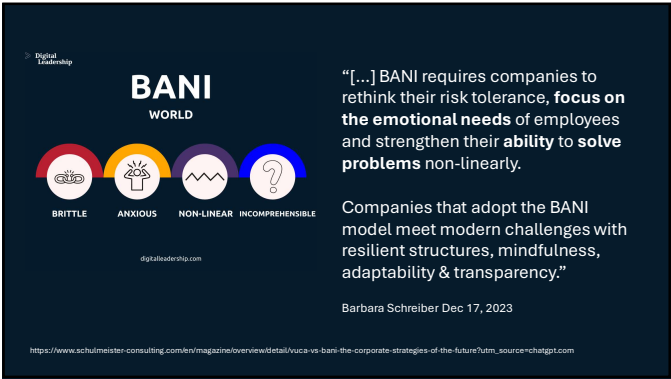
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“Think of the stressed-out brain as a plate of spaghetti. **The noodles are a tangled mess.** One twists around another. You can’t easily identify where one begins and another ends. They are jumbled, disorderly and difficult to shape.”

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Eber, K. (2018, January). Make waffles, not spaghetti. Chief Learning Officer. <https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2018/01/25/make-waffles-not-spaghetti/>

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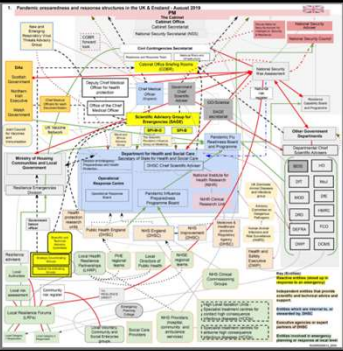
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Source: Extract from [INQ000204014](https://public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/22/155048/INQ000204014.pdf) | <https://public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/22/155048/INQ000204014.pdf>

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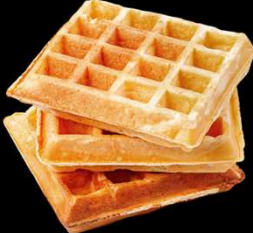
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“A waffle has many squares. It is orderly. Each square is compartmentalized. You can focus on one square at a time. You know the other squares are there, but you don’t have to pay attention to them.”

➤ “The goal as a leader is to focus employees on what is known.”

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CONFERENCE

Eber, K. (2018, January). Make waffles, not spaghetti. Chief Learning Officer. <https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2018/01/25/make-waffles-not-spaghetti/>

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Digital Leadership

**BANI**  
WORLD

BRITTLE   ANXIOUS   NON-LINEAR   INCOMPREHENSIBLE

digitalleadership.com

**The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Adaptability**

"To address brittleness, organizations must prioritize factors like **emotional intelligence** and **empathy**."

These qualities can help build better employee relations, foster a more supportive work environment, and enhance adaptability."

Stefan F. Dieffenbacher, 2023

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**Misconceptions, over-simplifications, and misapplications of psychological safety**

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[...] It's important to express confidence in your ability to meet the future - just make sure you **don't give unfounded assurances**, which is simply dangerous."

Timothy R. Clark, HBR, 2024

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© Françoise Mathieu 2025 | TEND 2025


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Psychological safety **is not:**

- Avoiding accountability or lowering standards.
- Synonymous with job security or a permanent state.
- Solely about mental health or diversity initiatives.
- A shield for underperformance or a substitute for genuine leadership.

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/listening-to-understand-for-leaders>



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Cautions and Misapplications

**Superficial Implementation**

Simply stating that an organization values psychological safety **without tangible actions** can be detrimental.

Such declarations, especially in toxic environments, can be perceived as insincere and may exacerbate existing issues.



<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/listening-to-understand-for-leaders>



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Fostering Psychological Safety  
**Strategies for Leaders**



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## From Judgment to Curiosity

Replace “*Why did you do that?*”  
with “*Can you tell me more?*”

<https://hbr.org/2018/04/leaders-stop-avoiding-hard-decisions>



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## From Perfection to Authenticity

- Normalize vulnerability: mistakes and tough days happen in helping work.
- Let go of “*I have to be perfect*” to protect colleagues and clients.
- Reframing mistakes as learning moments can reduce moral distress.

Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Quality of Health Care in America, Kohn, L. T., Corrigan, J. M., & Donaldson, M. S. (Eds.). (2000). *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System*. National Academies Press (US).



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## From Closing Down to Opening Up

- Team check-ins: naming what’s working and what’s hard.
- Modeling vulnerability: “*I don’t have all the answers.*”
- Encouraging small questions rather than big leaps.
- Leaders as role models: how to listen, how to invite questions.
- Checking for hierarchy: are newer or quieter voices being heard?



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### Trauma Exposure & Psychological Safety

- Acknowledging how trauma exposure can erode trust and safety.
- Teams that talk about it can reduce the impacts of secondary traumatic stress.



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### Building a Culture That Lasts

- Embedding safety into daily work: small steps over time.
- Celebrating the small wins - one conversation, one safe moment at a time.



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### Reflection Questions



- What are the moments when you wanted to speak **but didn't**?
- What might help you or your team create more space for **authentic conversations**?
- How might you gently **invite others** to speak up?



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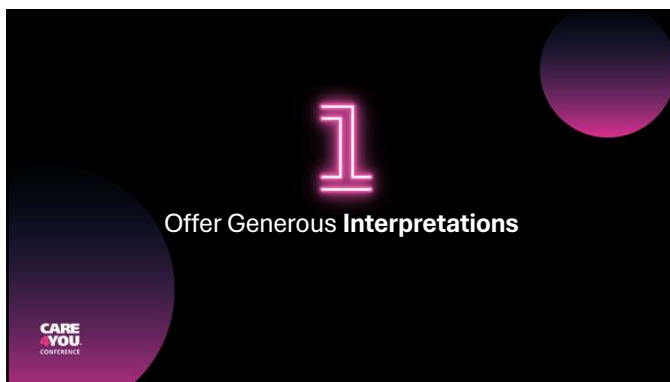
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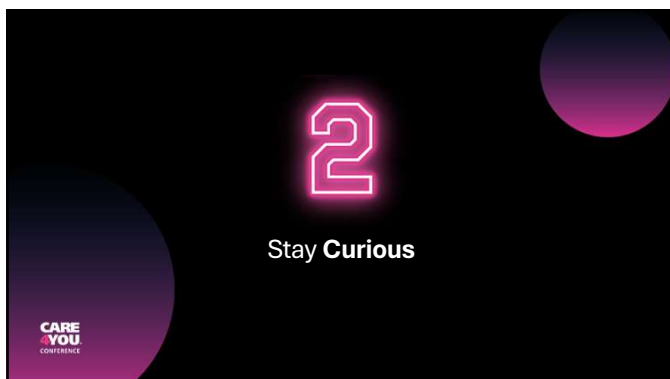
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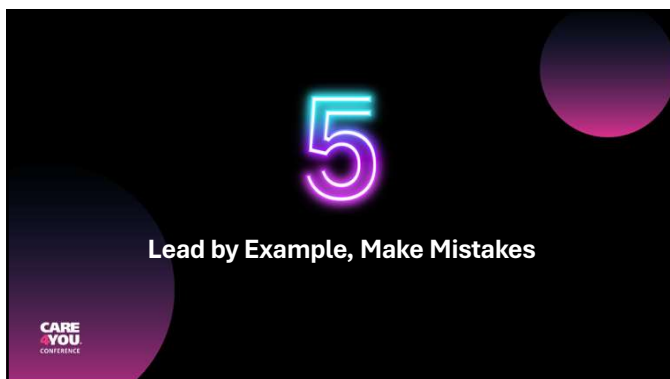
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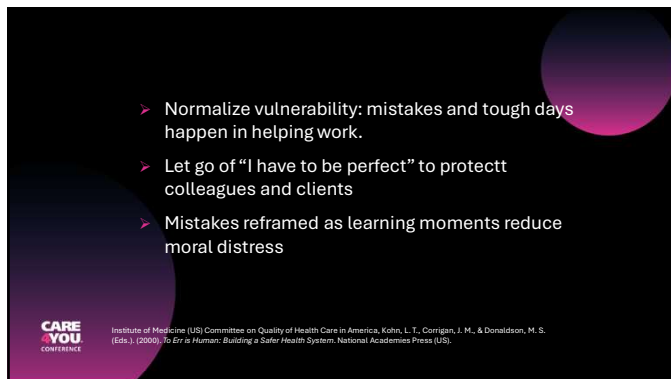
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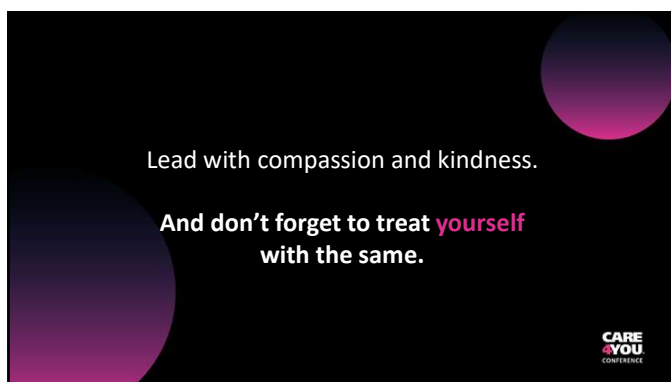
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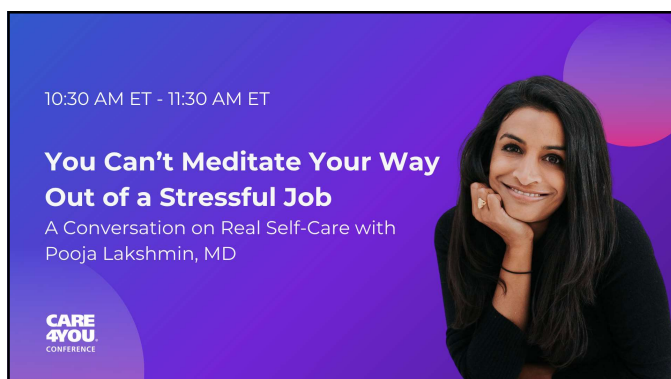
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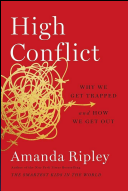
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When you find yourself in high conflict situations, **ask these three questions:**

- Does it need to be said?
- Does it need to be said by *me*?
- Does it need to be said by me *right now*?

(It's surprising how often the answer is NO.)

Ripley, A. (2021). High conflict: why we get trapped and how we get out. Simon & Schuster.

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W . A . I . T .

Why . Am . I . Talking?

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Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

➤ Workplace Strategies for Mental Health.com | Stratégies en milieu de travail sur la santé mentale.com

https://www.tendatv.com/post/mentalhealth/mental\_health\_workplace\_strategies\_for\_mental\_health\_activity-71207671456736270732bun7

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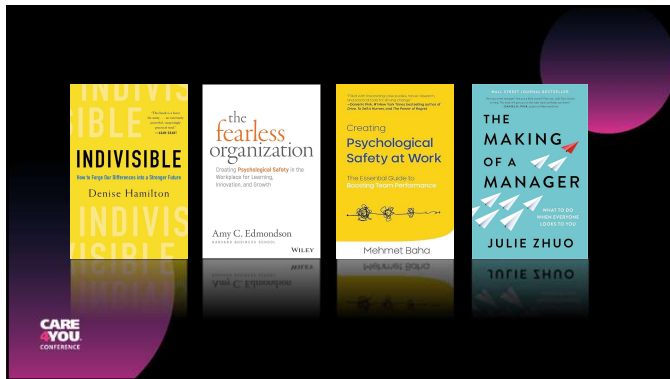
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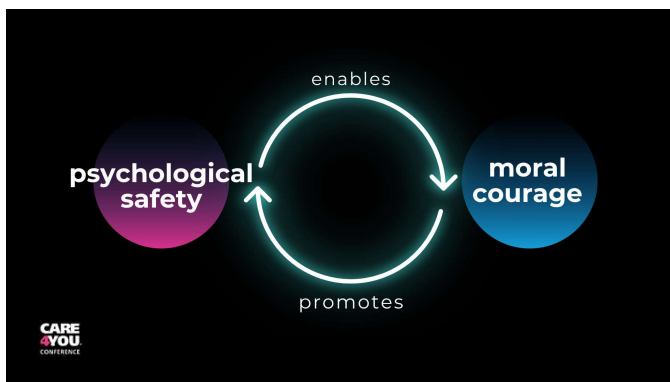
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